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D I S C O U R S E S

O N

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

BY THE

REV. H. E. HOLDER.

VOL. IV.



DISCOURSES

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

DELIVERED IN

THE ISLAND OF BARBADOES,

BY THE

REV. H. E. HOLDER,

OF THAT PLACE.

VOL. IV.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR C. DILLY, IN THE POULTRY.

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... -coffo an misso due nomina an bogano evni
HIS EXCELLENCY

GENERAL MATTHEW, &c. &c.
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... *May it please your Excellency,*

I HAVE the honour to present you with a
Fourth Volume of Discourses, which I
have ventured to add to the other Three, al-
ready given to the public. I trust that you
will believe that I feel the extent of the favour
you have done me, in suffering me to bring it
forward under the auspices of your name. I
flatter myself, that you will also believe that I
rejoice in the opportunity of testifying the
warmth of the gratitude with which I am
bound to your Excellency. To pretend to
contribute any thing on my part to swell the
tide of approbation and applause which from
every quarter has uniformly flowed into your
channel, is beyond my power, and foreign to
my intention. The world at large can bear
witness to the dignity with which you have

a - 801 . 1777 ennobled

ennobled the highest civil and military stations, and to that suavity and affability of deportment, peculiarly your own, by which you have engaged its affection and esteem as effectually as you have commanded its respect and veneration.— All that I would think of doing is, to acknowledge the influence of such a character on my mind and affections, and, with a laudable regard to the interests of that part of the British dominions to which I belong, to wish that as large a portion of your life may be given to us as possible; and that that life, in the enjoyment of health and every other personal blessing, may long be spared for the good of mankind in general, and of your amiable family in particular.

In these sentiments, I beg leave to subscribe myself

Your Excellency's

most obedient

and obliged humble servant,

HENRY EVANS HOLDER.

Bristol, January 1, 1792.

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DISCOURSE I.

A LENT SERMON

I JOHN iii. 8.

DISCOURSE
ON
THE
SAYINGS

DISCOURSE I.

1 ST. JOHN III. part of verse 8th.

FOR THIS PURPOSE THE SON OF GOD WAS
MANIFESTED, THAT HE MIGHT DESTROY
THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL.

THE beloved apostle St. John, having strongly insisted on the love of God to man, so strikingly evidenced by the Christian adoption, and the unspeakable hope which is annexed to it, proceeds to shew the conditions of that hope on the side of man, as well as the natural consequences which flow from the rational entertainment of it: — “ Every man,” says he, “ that hath this hope in him,

B “ puri-

2 DISCOURSE I.

“ purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” — Under the law, too, he declares that the same purity was necessary to true obedience, and the implied expectation of reward. “ Whosoever committeth sin, “ transgresseth also the law ; for sin is “ the transgression of the law : — and,” with respect to the gospel-requisitions, ye know “ that he was manifested to take “ away our sins : and in him is no sin : “ whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not : “ whosoever sinneth, hath not seen him, “ neither known him ;” — is as much a stranger to the spirit of his gospel as he that had not seen him was a stranger to his person when upon earth. These observations naturally lead him to correct an error which seems to have been always prevalent among mistaken religionists, of every age and profession ; namely, That morality is distinct from religion. “ Little children,” says he, “ let no man deceive you : he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous ;”

DISCOURSE I.

3

"ous ;" who was in deed no less than in word, in reality as well as in appearance. This position he proceeds to prove, in the clearest and most succinct manner : — "He," says he, "that committeth sin is of the Devil; for the Devil sinneth from the beginning." Of course then, none who pretended to the adoption of the sons of God could dare to give into the habitual practice of sin, which was the characteristic of the children of the Devil : and, besides this, the intent of our Saviour's mission absolutely contradicted the propriety of such a practice ; — for, says he, "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil." It could not then be possible that his true disciples and followers should adhere to the performance of works, which their duty called them to abandon and put down as much as possible. Consequently, as he concludes in express terms, "He that is born of God doth not commit sin ;"

4 DISCOURSE I.

“ sin ;” — is not flagrantly addicted to error, and does not voluntarily persist in any sin whatsoever ; and this, “ because “ his seed remaineth in him,” because that that capacity of a new life, which his grace from within and his word from without, have imparted to him, his will has closed with and established as the basis and leading principle of his conduct : “ and he cannot sin, because he is “ born of God ;” the proof of his regeneration to the divine Sonship, being no-
thing else than his exemption from gross transgressions and vicious habits, which are wholly incompatible with such an adoption. In this the children of God “ are manifested, and the children of the “ Devil : whosoever doth not righteous-
“ ness is not of God ; neither he that lo-
“ veth not his brother.”

From this general view of the apostle’s reasoning, we can have no difficulty in understanding the meaning of that part of it which is contained in my text :—

“ For

DISCOURSE I. 5

"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil :—" that he might abolish wickedness and establish virtue, as universally and as effectually as possible.

In proving this assertion, I propose,

I. To consider both the object of his manifestation ; namely, the works of the Devil, which he was to destroy ; and the reality of such manifestation to that purpose.

II. Our obligations in consequence of it. And,

III. What are the most likely means to enable us to discharge them.

I. That there was indeed a stupendous work of the Devil to be destroyed when our blessed Lord undertook the mighty task of overthrowing it, can hardly be denied. If we but turn our eyes to the Garden of Eden, we shall see a scene transacted there, in which he was the

prime, and alas! successful agent : the fall of man was indeed of his original and diabolical accomplishment. From that fatal period he has been indeed working with unwearied assiduity in the minds of the children of disobedience, and urging them to various actions, in contradiction to their duty in all its branches. If his influence has been never entirely predominant and universal, it has been only thro' the gracious interposition of the ever-blessed Son of God, who, as the Seed of the woman, was to bruise the Serpent's head, from the very moment that he was promised to the guilty and disconsolate exiles from Paradise, has been continually maintaining an opposition to the kingdom of darkness, which he was endeavouring to establish in the human mind. Hence it is that, in the most degenerate ages of the heathen world, we see, here and there, some glimmering rays of divine truth piercing thro' the general gloom ; some scattered traces of vir-

DISCOURSE I.

7

tue and goodness in the accumulated mass of corruption; something like a sense of human infirmity, and of the want of a Redeemer, discovering itself among the wild and visionary schemes of Theology, which were invented and delivered by those who delighted to be distinguished by the vulgar as the wise, and the * lovers of wisdom. And when in the fulness of time the same Son of God was pleased to exhibit himself, not only as the inward “ light, that lighteth every man “ that cometh into the world,” but as a man himself, clothed in the very nature he was to redeem, his life and doctrines furnished a pregnant proof that the purpose of his mission was to rescue it from the dominion of Satan, and that he was fully equal to accomplish it. By an appointment most strictly consistent with the general object of his incarnation, we find him destined in his own person to encounter and overcome his malice in its

most

most direct and virulent attacks against himself. Into the wilderness of Judea, we are told in scripture, that he was led by the spirit to be tempted of the Devil : and, accordingly, we find that he there withstood and overcame every attempt which his insolence, carried to its utmost pitch, could contrive and execute. In his ministry we behold him perpetually engaging his emissaries and legions, and expelling them by a word, from the wretched victims possest by them. And in his last bitter passion ; a season which he himself describes as particularly given up to the power of darkness, when Satan was indeed permitted to revel in all his native insolence and fury,—at that amazing period he may be truly said to have been more than Conqueror, by rising from the dead, and ascending in his human nature to those blissful regions which he was about to open for the reception of those of his brethren in the flesh, who, thro' him, should “overcome, even as he

“ over-

DISCOURSE I.

"overcame," And with respect to his exertions to destroy the works of the Devil, as they might influence the minds and conduct of his disciples, we have only to examine his doctrines to be convinced that they as uniformly tended to the same end as his own spotless life and perfect example. The works in question, we know, comprehend, in a moral sense, every species of wickedness and impiety that can be conceived : nor was there one of these that could shelter itself under his protection. His harbinger, St. John, very aptly described his coming as an event which "laid the ax to the root of the tree," in order that "every tree which brought not forth good fruit should be hewn down, and cast into the fire." With impartial severity he condemned pride and self-will, anger and revenge, cruelty and uncharitableness, lust and intemperance, impiety and immorality, in all their various forms, degrees, and palliations ; condemned them not only when they

10 DISCOURSE I.

they were exerted into action; but when they secretly fermented in the breast, and were only discoverable by him, from whom nothing is hid. And in an opposite view of the positive tendency of his gospel, we may boldly affirm, with the apostle, that " whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," all are comprehended within the limits of its injunctions ; insomuch that, was every other evidence wanting of its divine origin, the fair and the candid enquirer must assent to its claim to such a derivation, from the internal proof which it exhibits of its excellence and perfection, of its being the especial means which God, in his infinite wisdom, has appointed to assert his own dominion, and to destroy the usurpation of the arch enemy of mankind.

And

DISCOURSE I.

11

And this brings me to our ~~Third~~ to our
Second consideration, Of the obliga-
tions we are under, in consequence of
our Saviour's manifestation to that speci-
fic end ; and these may be easily deduced
from the preceding part of our Discourse ;
for if it be true that " for this purpose
" the Son of God was manifested, that he
" might destroy the works of the Devil,"
there can be no doubt that his disciples
are bound to renounce them in every in-
stance ; and that if they do not renounce
them, they can have no pretension to any
advantages which might otherwise re-
ound to them from his interposition.
Never was there so fatal an error as that
which has induced men to believe that
true religion could possibly be separated
from morality ; — that he " who loved
" God " was not bound " to love his
" brother also ;" or that he who loved
his brother was thereby exempted from
the discharge of his obligations to God.
The truth of the case is, That all the vir-

tues

tues of Christianity are corelative and co-incident; so that no one can exist in any perfection where the others are wanting, or incomplete. He, therefore, that would consistently affirm, That there is any one vice which he may practise, or any one virtue which he may neglect, with impunity, must first prove that he is at liberty utterly to confound all the distinctions of right and wrong, and to live as he pleases, in every respect; otherwise he may be assured, that every vice which he is cautious of committing, and every virtue that he is wishful to practise, by proving the existence of some moral rule of conduct, convicts him of absurdity, and proves that he acts against reason, as well as against religion, when he ventures upon sin, and is satisfied with a partial observance, or rather inobservance, of his duty.—It being then evident that the gospel requires of us at least an endeavour after universal righteousness, holiness,

DISCOURSE I. 13

lines, and purity, we may proceed, in
the

Third Place, To consider what are the most likely means to enable us to discharge the duties which it lays upon us ; and these every sober and well-disposed person who will apply the preceding train of reflections to himself, may naturally arrive at, in the course of his meditations. In such a reference he will first of all acknowledge that he is bound to the practice of all the duties which the gospel inculcates, and to the renunciation of all the vices which it condemns ; but that he is extremely deficient, both in respect of what he ought to do, and to avoid doing. And here his particular failings will range themselves in dreadful array before him, and will surprize him with their number and magnitude, and with the urgent necessity, but extreme difficulty, of getting rid of them. Having advanced thus far, it will be in vain for him to endeavour to stop short : he will unavoidably be wretched

24 DISCOURSE I.

ed under these convictions; he will ab-
sent his guilt, he will repent having in-
curred it, he will wish for pardon from
the Being whose commands he has trans-
gressed, and he will determine to amend
his conduct in future; and what so likely
or so proper for him to do at this stage of
his progress as to apply himself, in earnest
supplication, to the throne of grace, to
obtain from thence that comfort of which
he stands so much in need! And here,
when with the publican he finites on his
breast, and says, God be merciful to me a
sinner! he will assuredly find his God and
Saviour ready to come in to his relief:
here he will assuredly hear him answer-
ing in those accents of love which his
gospel has recorded for the consolation of
every broken and contrite heart, "Come
unto me, all ye that travail and are
heavy laden, and I will refresh you." And as certain as he receives the promise,
so certainly will he experience its per-
formance: every pang of contrition,
every

DISCOURSE I. 45

every wish he forms, every sigh he breathes, in a desire of amendment, will be followed by the unspeakable aids and assistances of the Holy Spirit, to render them abundantly fruitful to their purpose: his own endeavours he will feel every day increasing in effect, his sinful inclinations diminishing in violence, his virtuous resolutions becoming more strong and permanent: imperfect he will indeed always be; but his errors will be never those of intention and habit: he will perpetually be working out his salvation with fear and trembling: and when inadvertency or surprize may lead him astray, he will hasten to return, and appeal to the goodness of God, and to the atoning merits of his Son, to pardon his deficiencies, and to bestow on his earnest but inadequate endeavours, that happiness in heaven which he acknowledges with all humility to be the free gift of his mercy in Jesus Christ.

Let us, my brethren, who are fully able to make the application we have been

16 DISCOURSE I.

been describing, and to profit by its consequences, advert to it as an obvious mean of our pursuing that line of duty which we may hitherto have languidly prosecuted, or perhaps greatly deserted: Let us employ some portion at least of the present season in strictly examining into the state of our moral and religious conduct: Let us candidly detect and honestly confess the many errors we have each of us been fondly cherishing, with a presumption which can admit of no excuse: Let us duly consider the heinousness of their nature, and the importance of their consequences, and thoroughly repent of, and steadily resolve to abandon them in future: Let us review the various particulars of our duty, and set ourselves to know and to practise it in all its branches; and, above all things, let us be mindful to ask that assistance of God in our work which, after all our best endeavours, we must be conscious that it will infallibly require: Let us ask it, both

in

DISCOURSE I. 17

in public and in private, not only at stated hours and seasons, but upon every emergency and difficulty to which a chequered and probationary life will undoubtedly expose us: Let us ask it with sincerity and fervency of heart, and with full assurance of faith, that he is able and willing to help us, and to bring us out of all our trouble: Let us strive to establish ourselves in the habit of such a conduct, and depend with patience and resignation upon his power and goodness for the issue; — upon that power and goodness, in the energy of which the ever-blessed Son of God vouchsafed to leave the mansions of eternity to be born, to live, and to die as a man, that he might redeem us from the punishment and slavery of sin, and bring us to everlasting happiness; upon that power and goodness, in the all-sufficiency of which we have the authority of God himself to believe and to affirm, That every true and faithful Christian shall abundantly share in the glories of his kingdom.

C DISCOURSE

ДОГОВОР

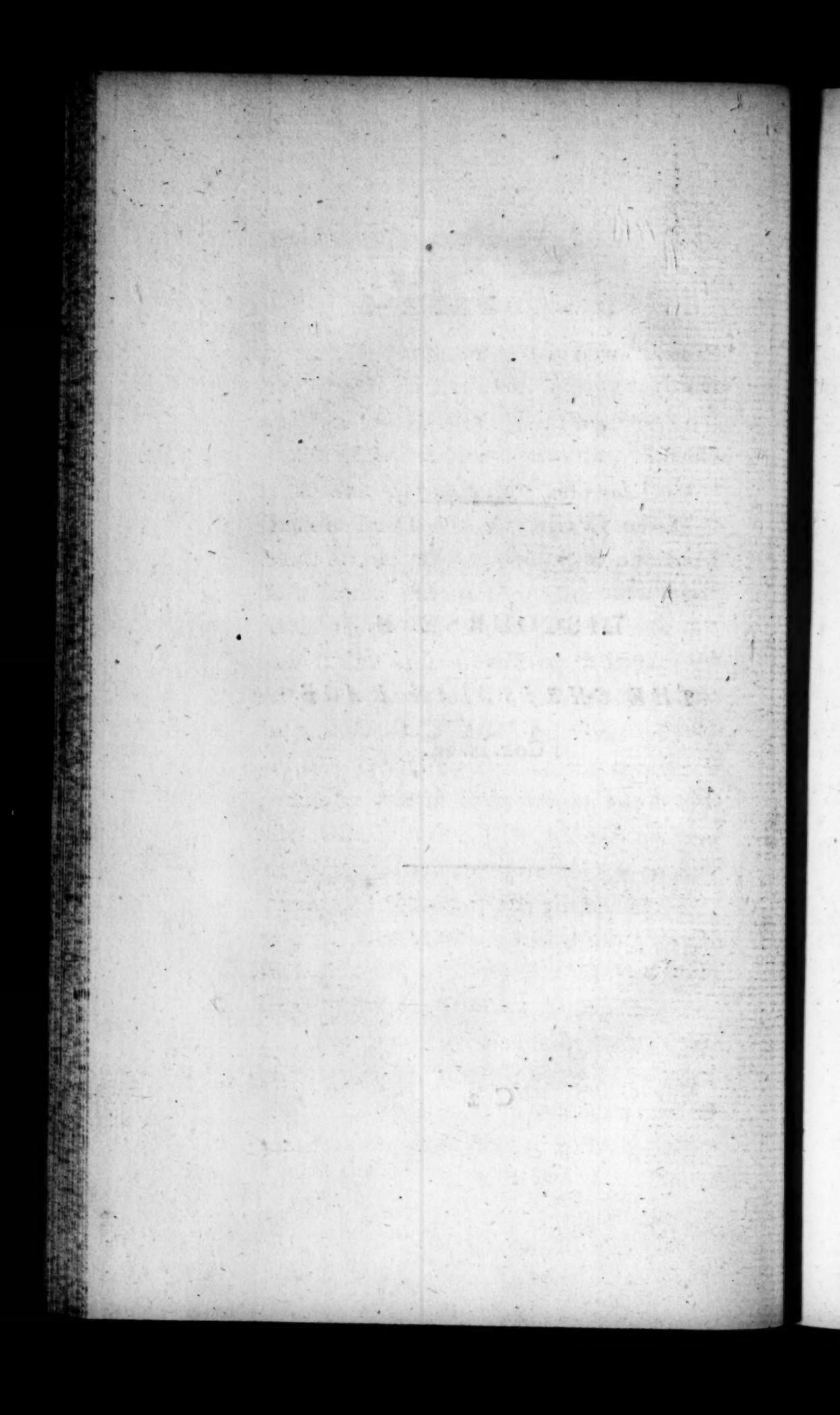
is who can, among us, be called a
true hero and another has won his
a double or triple life. The
man I now call a hero is an elderly citizen
now in his sixties, who has been a
member of our community for many years —
a man who has always been a
quiet, unobtrusive, and unselfish
citizen, and who has never
done a single act of violence or
injury to any other person. He
has always been a man of great
courage and self-sacrifice, and
has always been ready to help
those in need, and to do what
he could to make the world a better
place for all. He is a man of great
character and integrity, and
is a true example to us all.

DISCOURSE II.

THE CHRISTIAN RACE.

1 COR. ix. 24.

C 2



DISCOURSE II.

I COR. IX. 24.

KNOW YE NOT, THAT THEY WHICH RUN
IN A RACE RUN ALL; BUT ONE RECEIV-
ETH THE PRIZE? SO RUN, THAT YE
MAY OBTAIN.

OUR apostle, in the passage before us, and some subsequent verses, is alluding to the games which were celebrated in the neighbourhood of the Corinthians with a degree of emulation and avidity; which furnished an opportunity for an excellent allusion to the duties and consequences of the Christian course.

"Know ye not," says he, that "they which run in a race run all; but one receiveth the prize?" Know ye not

C 3 that

that many of the candidates for the Olympic honours fall short of the prize? “ So run, that ye may obtain.” In like manner, your course is hazardous, and the champion who enters upon it without due foresight and preparation, will be disappointed of his hope. Such prudent measures as are necessary, you are bound to adopt without delay; the nature of which will of course require your strictest attention. “ Every man that striveth for the mastery [in those games] is temperate in all things :” moderation, temperance, and self-government, are also the indispensable requisites to your success. “ Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown ; but we, an incorruptible.” If, therefore, they can reasonably be induced, for so trifling a reward, to make such a sacrifice of present gratification, how much more does it become us, whose recompense is so transcendently great and permanent, to do our utmost to qualify ourselves for it !

Such

DISCOURSE II. 23

Such appears to be the nature of the apostle's comparison; the spirit of which, after dropping the parallel, is probably this; to warn us of the hazard and difficulty of obtaining the Christian crown; to suggest the means of over-ruling them; and to convince us of the importance of striving against them, and the blessings which await our success.

I. That the difficulty and hazard of obtaining the Christian crown are indeed very great, it is impossible for man, knowing what he is, and what Christianity requires, seriously to doubt. Our natures are wretchedly prone to evil; and, though none of us want the means of resisting it, through the continual influence of divine grace, we are but too apt perversely to reject or to postpone its admonitions. How far we are suffered to trifle with its advances, it is impossible to tell; but this at least is certain, that there is a point, beyond which we are left to our own blindness and corruptions;

and that every thing in that state is an aggravation of our present depravity and future misery. Such a state is, therefore, morally incapable of obtaining the Christian Crown: we may even say that it is impossible they can exist together. Descending then from this summit of wickedness, through all its inferior gradations, we go down from the impossibility, to the various degrees of difficulty and hazard which oppose its possession; and, till we can say, what no one can say without presumption, that we have entirely subdued our sinful nature, we are forced to acquiesce in the truth of the apostle's position, That tho' many in the Christian race are candidates for the prize, there are but very few who can expect to win it. But here let us be cautious how we suppose that any of those who fall short of it, have been deprived by God of the means of attaining it, through any arbitrary exertion of his own powers. To all of us,

DISCOURSE II. 25

it is undoubtedly true, that it is difficult to get the mastery ; but that difficulty his mercy has over-ruled ; and it is our own opposition of its purpose which can again render it unsurmountable. A thousand and a thousand times is the sinner checked in as many ways, by an unseen monitor within him ; and though he repeatedly rejects his counsels, still his time of trial is protracted ; often perhaps to the very end of his existence. Never, at any rate, is he deserted by his kindly influence, before he has become incapable of profiting by it ; before he has grown callous to instruction ; and, as the apostle expresses, morally “dead intrespasses and sins.” The greatness of the difficulty then depends on ourselves ; and, considered upon a balance with the moral assistances which are afforded us by the Holy Spirit, it is, in itself, only sufficient to keep our attention constantly awake, and to render our lives a system of discipline, probation, and gradual improvement

26 DISCOURSE II.

ment in virtue. The permission of its existence is therefore no impeachment of the divine goodness, being in fact unavoidably necessary to our condition as reasonable agents; as persons who have a will of their own, and who are permitted to make a good and a bad use of it: particularly when we recollect how abundantly we are informed in the gospel of the remedies against it; and how obvious the application and efficacy of them are to our natural apprehension of things. And these we are now, in the second place to consider, as they are exhibited by the apostle in the context.

II. "Every one that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things." We have seen that our grand obstacles to success are our own vicious inclinations; *i. e.* in fact, our wicked selves. Self-denial, then, and self-mortification are the means we should employ to subdue those obstacles with advantage and effect. No middle course can be adopted
in

in our dealing with our corrupted nature: it must either be subdued, or it will subdue us. Various are the forms in which it discovers itself, and those forms we must diligently search out, and attend to. And so it is, that among the several instances of moral delinquency, it is generally found that we have some favourite sin or another, to which we are particularly addicted; and against this it becomes us to be especially guarded. The quarter which it has taken possession of, is clearly our weak side; and we have most likely the strongest aversion against being attacked upon that:—But there we must be assaulted with peculiar vigour; and until we are able to guard it from the enemy, it is in vain that we can flatter ourselves with having obtained the government of ourselves. This is one of the crosses we must continually bear, even in these days, when the sword of persecution seems sheathed for ever: in cases too when our own private lot appears especially

28 DISCOURSE II.

pecially exempted from the common misfortunes of human life. Our Lord has told us, that "if any man will come after him" (will be his disciple, and aspire to the blessings consequent upon being such) "let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow him."

The peculiar cross we are to bear is not to be of our own choice; not any easy service which can best accommodate itself to our depraved inclinations, and require the least exertion to accomplish it. The ultimate design of all our trials is to subdue our sinful nature, and to prepare us for heaven; and that design, we are to observe, is ever to be kept in view; for we are to take up our cross daily, to pursue our work continually; and as long as a wayward propensity exists within us, to consider it as incomplete, and still requiring our perseverance and assiduity: and for our encouragement, it is worthy of remark, that this discipline, rigid as it may at first appear, is the most difficult

DISCOURSE II. 29

ficult to our practice, in the commencement of its exercise: every succeeding endeavour becomes less irksome and more effectual, and, in proportion to its renewal, is the more successful; and when once we are sensible of having gained the ascendant over ourselves, it is incredible to conceive the comfort we experience. Of all the slaveries which can exist, the cruellest and the most abject is that of sin; its nature most oppressive, its effects most extensive, its consequences most deplorable: and he who has once been delivered from it, is then incapable of being truly miserable. He has, within, a fund of consolation, ever ready to be applied to the worst exigence; and what is wanting to himself he can abundantly obtain from heaven. And this brings me to consider the 3d particular I collected from the apostle's allusion; namely, The importance of striving against our moral difficulties already explained, and the blessings which await our successful efforts.

III. Of

III. Of the importance of such endeavours we have already been in some measure apprized; so far as we have been instructed in the misery of sin, and the advantages of being rid of its influence: something more, however, it may not be improper to say upon this head.

To every one who knows any thing of human life, it is obvious that it is exposed to a variety of calamities; many of these are, at any rate, extremely distressing and severe: when they come upon a mind labouring under the burden of sin, I may say that they are grievous and intolerable. When the prospect lowers all around, and we see no resource remaining to us from the interposition of human means, how dreadful must it be to be convinced of the presumption of seeking for support from the only power who can furnish it! On the contrary, when divine wisdom thinks fit to try us by various methods, when its paternal chastisements wound us to the very quick, and sting us

in

DISCOURSE II.

31

in our tenderest attachments,—how infinitely consolatory is it to be able to apply the same hand who is afflicting us, for the relief we so greatly want, and to be sure to obtain it ! To you, ye virtuous sons and daughters of affliction, I would appeal, to bear witness of the importance of having secured yourselves such an inexhaustible source of comfort. Weep, ye undoubtedly will, with the most profigate of your race. The superficial spectator beholds the similitude, and thinks your lot the same; but he sees not the secrets of your breast. He hears not the Redeemer rebuking the storm that has arisen in your minds, and lulling every ruder blast and raging wave to calmness and repose.—Upon every occasion of need, his assistance is uniformly afforded, with ineffable advantage; but upon none so remarkably as in the last great trial of human nature, in the hour of death ! At this amazing moment, my brethren, the importance of a life which has been emancipated

emancipated from the bondage of sin, surpasses all understanding. Here, could we look beyond the veil of animal distress and agony, which conceals the real condition of the dying saint from our view, we should be indubitably convinced that the most poignant sting of death is sin; and that where its influence has been destroyed, the triumphs of the king of terrors are transient and inconsiderable indeed! For here the glories of the kingdom of heaven unfold themselves to his enraptured view; here the “incorruptible crown” offers itself to his grasp; and the invitation of our Lord to “the blessed,” bids him to “come and inherit the kingdom prepared for him, from the foundation of the world.” Now it is that he rejoices in having been tried by misfortune, temptation, and difficulty; now he recollects with comfort that he has striven against them; and denied to corrupt nature the gratification it sought, in yielding to their influence.

Now

Now it is that he acknowledges the goodness of God, in having assisted his weakness, and strengthened him when, sensible of his native insufficiency, he had sought for help from his all-powerful grace. Now does he feel, in its full force, that “all” on this side the grave, “is vanity and vexation of spirit.” Every power and inclination of his soul urges him to meet the summons which calls him beyond it. Each earthly attachment gives way; and the instant which bursts the bond of connection between his carnal and his spiritual nature, approaches without terror, arrives, accomplishes its purpose, and launches him into eternity, under the influence of pious hope and patient resignation. Farther, it is impossible that our finite conceptions should follow him; but this, under every defect of comprehension, we may be certain of, That every tranquilizing thought and comfortable idea, have been the faintest delineation, and the most im-

perfect anticipation of the happiness which awaits him above. By different modes of allusion, revelation has endeavoured to raise our minds to something commensurate with its magnitude ; but “ eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” We are told that the kingdom we are to inherit, is the kingdom of heaven : and the crown we are to wear, a crown of glory and immortality. Thousands and ten thousands of years, we are assured, are as nothing in comparison of that eternity of bliss which we shall enjoy in the presence of God himself, and in participation with his blessed Son. Every expression that can fill, that can transport the mind beyond itself, has been used upon the occasion ; and the veracity of God himself has attested, that they fall infinitely short of those blessings which we shall be enabled to enjoy. Shall we

not

not then, my brethren, so run our moral race, that we may obtain the noble prize which is held out to us? Shall not we be at least as anxious to ensure an incorruptible crown, as the champions of this world to procure the corruptible one which they so studiously seek? Shall we think it below us to be "temperate in all things," when they submit to every regulation and discipline which the exigencies of their purpose demand? Surely it does not require the inspired eloquence of St. Paul to engage you to enter the lists in such a cause; to urge you to excel them, with motives so transcendently superior, upon an occasion so infinitely more interesting, for an end so incomprehensibly more valuable. Even the pleadings of self-interest will be more than sufficient to convince you of the expedience, of the importance, of the necessity of the conflict.

Let us then, my brethren, joyfully prepare ourselves to join those chosen

few who have followed their blessed Master; who with him have fought, and with him have conquered: and may his unspeakable assistance ensure us first the victory, and then the blessed fruits of it, which he himself has purchased for his disciples at the price of his own precious blood!

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE III.

TRUST IN GOD.

PSALM lxxiii. 25.

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DISCOURSE III.

ARTS IN GOD.

PATER LXXXVII. 2.

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DISCOURSE III.

PSALM LXXIII. 25.

**WHOM HAVE I IN HEAVEN BUT THEE? AND
THERE IS NONE UPON EARTH THAT I DE-
SIRE BESIDE THEE.**



IT is an incontestible matter of fact, that there is no temper of mind so important to man (as a rational creature, capable and desirous of happiness) as that firm trust, confidence, and reliance upon God. Such a trust as, under any circumstances whatever, remains invariably fixed, and consistent with itself. This was precisely the disposition which the psalmist informs us, that by sober reflection and devout application to God, he had at

40 DISCOURSE III.

length engrafted upon his own mind, and on which he was determined to found all his principles of conduct.

In the commencement of the psalm of my text, he shews us that he had not always been under so happy a direction ; for a time had been when “ his feet were al-“ most gone, and his steps had well nigh “ slipped ;” and that because “ he was “ envious at the foolish, when he saw “ the prosperity of the wicked.” Every little instance of their success and advantage, he considered as a new argument of the little profit to be derived from the steady adherence to a virtuous course. “ Verily,” said he, “ I have “ cleansed my heart in vain, and washed “ my hands in innocency :” and here, a retrospect of his own situation, surrounded with difficulties, came in to increase his doubt and distrust. In fact, such a situation is necessarily implied by the whole tenor of the psalm : With such a frame of mind, what are we to think

DISCOURSE III. 41

think of his constancy and resignation to the will of God? In truth they appear to us, just then to be reduced to their lowest ebb. But let us not conceive that he was ever irreligious from principle; he felt, no doubt, dissatisfied and discontented; the view of things perplexed and confounded him. He tells us himself, that "when he sought to know this, it was too painful to him." At the same time it is evident that he was conscious of an error in himself, and that he wished to be relieved from its influence. It was, he observes, "too painful for him, until he went into the sanctuary of God;" and then, when in devout application to the throne of grace, he poured out the bitterness of his soul, he obtained from thence relief to his distress, conviction to his doubts, a firm persuasion of the wisdom of resignation to the will of God, and a steady resolution to be resigned himself, in every situation. With respect to the wicked, he then thoroughly
"understood

“understood the end.” “Thou, O God!” said he, “didst set them in slippery places ; thou castedst them down into destruction : how are they brought to desolation, as in a moment ! They are utterly consumed with terrors.” Then did his injustice to God bear hard upon his mind. “My heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins ; so foolish was I and ignorant : I was as a beast before thee.” And his own situation, however difficult and distressing, he was now ready and eager to acknowledge, to be under the guidance of a God of mercy and loving-kindness. “Thou shalt hold me with thy right hand ; thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to thy glory :” “Whom have I in heaven but thee ? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth ; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.”

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DISCOURSE III. 43.

The description which is here given us by the psalmist of his state of mind, appears to be extremely natural and consistent; but the doubts and perplexities which distinguish it, are frequently exemplified in the secret workings of every human mind. It is not, however, always found that they have the same happy issue in every person as in him; not everyone who is disturbed by them is as ready to go into the sanctuary of God; and therefore not every one attains to that conviction which wrought so happy a change in him. And this it will be found is the material point of difference, which constitutes so striking a dissimilarity of conduct between the generality of mankind and himself; which occasions them to be so attached to this or that folly, to this or that vice, to this or that worldly pursuit and object of affection; while he professed, and from his general conduct appears truly to have professed, that he had "none in heaven

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"but God, and none that he desired upon earth but him ;" that he was indifferent in this world to every thing but loving and pleasing God ; and finally interested in no event of things but the ultimate possession of happiness in heaven, through him obtained, and by him conferred.

Upon a superficial view of this world, and the things of it, there can be no wonder excited, that such an imperfect being as man, compounded of earthly as well as heavenly materials ; corrupt in principle and defective in understanding, seeing by parts and ready by them to decide upon the whole,—that such a being, I say, should sometimes be perplexed and staggered with what he meets with in the course of his pilgrimage thro' this vale of misery. This may happen to men of the best intentions, and the best information ; and in no situation so probably, as in that particularly alluded to by the psalmist ; in a state of adversity,

DISCOURSE III.

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fity, wherein we conceive ourselves to be severely dealt with by Providence, and in which of course our sensations are most deeply interested, and most violently attacked.

Among the other corruptions of our nature, we find a most excessive degree of self-sufficiency and vanity, which in every case is apt to shew itself by the most incontestible marks. The consequence of this is, that upon the first invasion of misfortune, it seldom happens that we receive it without a kind of involuntary complaint,—‘that we have not deserved to bear so heavy a burden.’ Hence it is, that the lesson of resignation is generally an acquisition of labour and application; human nature, like a rebel child, struggling under the chastisement it receives, and venting its passion, before it submits to the discipline inflicted. At such a moment as this the anguish that is felt passes all imagination and description; and if the sufferer hardens himself

against

against the design of his visitation, that design becomes totally perverted. What was intended to be salutary and medicinal, is rendered poisonous and destructive; the source of comfort is blocked up for ever; affliction ends in desperation, and desperation in destruction. On the contrary, in this shipwreck of his happiness, there is yet remaining a haven where he may repair his shattered bark, and, after all his distresses, at length safely arrive at his desired country. This resource too is fully in his power to know and to make use of: — Is he afflicted? Let him enquire then from whence is that affliction derived? — He knows that he is every moment in the hand of God; a weak defenceless mortal, under the direction of Omnipotence: — but an omnipotent being, as wise, as good and gracious, as he is powerful. To his command, or to his permission, he must therefore at any rate attribute his afflictions: at the same time he must consider them

them as designed to answer a wise and a beneficial purpose. He sees then that he has been afflicted by God; because that it was right that he should be so dealt with; and that, in some way or other, his advantage may be promoted. The next point of enquiry is, Why it is right, and how it may be for his advantage?—To answer this question fairly and fully, it is necessary that he should look in upon himself. Hitherto it may be, that he has been in a state of prosperity. Every scheme he has formed, every relation he has acquired, have been permanent and propitious. His moral conduct may probably have been free from any heinous offences; his religious duties, more or less attended to, as circumstances have happened:—but self-love has been gaining ground in the mean while; and the heart, it is much to be feared, has gradually forgotten its dependence on, and in fact renounced its allegiance to God: a thousand and a thousand little errors
and

and vices have secretly been indulged, uncorrected ; what has been done rightly has been done with indifference and apathy, while the affections have been occupied by the pleasures enjoyed ; and the world has become the final term and object of their attachment. This, I say, is more or less the case in a state of uninterrupted prosperity ; and if so, there can be no difficulty in answering the enquiry, Why the affliction experienced is right in itself, and how it may redound to our advantage ? It is clear that it is right, because that it is a probable means of redeeming us from error and destruction, and putting us in a safer and better course of moral conduct ; and in producing this effect it is as clear that it must redound to our advantage. At this stage of its influence, it in the first place awakens our conscience, points out our vicious habits, and detects our sins of omission, the number of which, in the best of us, is infinitely more than we can conceive.

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ceive. Then too, it is that we discover how unaccountably we have been estranged from the love of God, and the doing of our duty: then it is that we feel the misery of sin, the importance and the comforts of virtue: and then it is especially that we are convinced of that truth, which of all others is most essential to the establishment of christianity in our hearts and minds, — ‘that we are unable to do any thing of ourselves, and are wholly dependent upon God for every thing we are, have, and hope for:’ then it is that we comprehend the full force of the psalmist’s exclamations, and, in the energy of his own devotion, can address them to the throne of grace: then it is, I would say, that, broken off from every worldly object of attachment, we are led to aspire after higher comforts than can be found in the scene of our disappointments; and following him into the sanctuary of God, are capable of applying them to ourselves, in the fervor

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of his temper, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee: my flesh and my will faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever!"—Thrice happy, my brethren, will it be for every child of affliction amongst us, to derive from his allotment of misfortune the advantage of having ingrafted upon the tablets of his heart the sentiments therein contained, in the same striking and indelible characters in which it was written upon the psalmist's, and pregnant with the same spirit of humility and piety; for then whatever his external circumstances in this world may be, it is impossible that he should be destitute of comfort and consolation: He has then arrived at that point in practical religion upon which its excellence and perfection depends: That worship of God, in spirit and in truth, which our blessed Saviour declared to the woman of Samaria, that God expected

DISCOURSE III.

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pected from his reasonable creatures. He is then awakened to the conviction of his want of a Redeemer and Sanctifier, and induced readily to accept, and eagerly to desire the Redeemer who has actually interposed to save us, and the Sanctifier who has already come to regenerate us to the condition of new creatures in Christ. He becomes crucified to the world, and the world to him ; and he looks forward to the hope of everlasting life with steady faith, and earnest endeavours to attain it, by a conduct suitable to one who considers himself a candidate for a blessed immortality.—In a word, with the heart-felt conviction of the all-sufficiency of God, and of God alone, to our happiness, every principle of Christianity is correlative and coincident ; and it requires but little argument to prove that, where those principles are combined, the result must be pre-eminently in our favour, both here and hereafter. Let us then, my brethren, be so far awakened to our own interest, as

to apply our hearts to the wisdom which is contained in that persuasion. It may be that, with the psalmist, we have been called to this study by the stern voice of affliction; but whether this be the case or not, it is more than probable that we shall all, sooner or later, be subjected to that discipline; and happy will it be for us to be prepared to receive it with the temper of mind recommended in the preceding Discourse; by that temper which we have shewn to be truly and essentially Christian:—to which, as such, a blessing is ensured, which outweighs every misfortune which human nature in its worst condition can be doomed to bear; for the legacy which our blessed Saviour bequeathed to his apostles, and from them to all his disciples, was his own ineffable peace, which passeth all understanding; a peace which he declared that the world could neither give nor take away; which softens every care, sooths every passion, and subdues every grief which can obtrude

DISCOURSE III. 53

trude itself in the mind ; which reconciles us to the loss of fortunes and friends ; of the nearest and dearest connections in human life ; which disarms death itself of its most appalling terrors ; and follows us beyond the grave to those mansions of eternity where sorrow and sighing shall flee away, where tears shall cease to flow, and where unfading happiness, by the immediate gift of the Son of God, and in the enlightening presence of God himself, shall be our lot in perpetual successions of enjoyment, from everlasting to everlasting.

DISCOURSES

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DISCOURSE IV.

IMPORTANCE OF EXAMPLE.

1 COR. ix. part of verse 27.

DISCOURS DE
M. LE DUC DE L'ESPAGNE

DISCOURSE IV.

COR. IX. part of verse 27.

**LEST THAT BY ANY MEANS, WHEN I HAVE
PREACHED TO OTHERS, I MYSELF SHOULD
BE A CASTAWAY.**

THE apostle had been inculcating the necessity and propriety of temperance and vigilance in the Christian course, with a very forcible allusion to those public games in which the Corinthians were particularly conversant. These general observations at length led him to mention himself, and to cite his own caution in the discharge of his duty as a preacher and propagator of the gospel; which, he adds, was so much the

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more important, "lest," in the words of my text, "when he had preached to others, he himself should be cast away."

It is evident that such an incongruity of life and doctrine as he declares that he was himself careful to avoid, would have been entirely destructive of his own hopes of salvation from that blessed gospel which he was commissioned to preach to others. But this was not all the evil which would have resulted from it. It might have been of the highest injury to his hearers : it would have been a gross infringement of the obligations he owed them, to instruct them by his own life, as well as by his preaching, in the excellence, importance, and advantage of the doctrines of the kingdom of heaven. In a word, it would have been totally to overthrow the fabric he professed to raise, and would have furnished a proof of his being an enemy to the cross of Christ; which the most elaborate eloquence and

the purest doctrine could never have destroyed.

- It should seem then, that it would not be foreign to the apostle's meaning, to consider him upon the present occasion as enforcing the importance of example, to be furnished by every one who undertakes to teach and to reform others ; or, in other words, that a teacher is under the most indispensable obligation to be himself the living pattern of his doctrines, for the imitation of his disciples, as far as his powers can enable him to be.

This position will naturally be first and principally applied to the conduct of ministers and preachers of the gospel. The sequel of the present Discourse will shew that it may be extended much farther : to every one who by his situation is entitled to exact obedience, and to enjoin duties of any kind from inferiors.

Should it be asked, if a doctrine, intrinsically true, right and worthy to be received, can require the sanction and confirmation

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confirmation of example? I would readily answer, No. But it is to be remembered, that instruction, when offered, is supposed principally to point at the ignorant; at such persons as are not convinced of its evidence and importance. In such a case, it is clear that the consistency of the instructor's life with his doctrines, must be a proof to them of his being persuaded of their truth, and of his being sincere when he urges them upon the practice of his hearers. Besides this, such a consistency gives authority to what he delivers, and ensures that patient and candid attention which is often, though improperly, withheld from the unfortunate teacher who protests against his own precepts by the irregularity of his conduct.

He therefore who has adventured to enter upon the arduous task of teaching others the momentous truths of Christianity,—he who has left the busy scenes of a world of pleasure and profit, and devoted

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voted himself to the cause of God and religion, must be strongly impressed with the idea that he is contracting a new debt to society, which the caution and circumspection of his whole life will scarcely discharge. He must ever bear in his mind that he is about to make war upon the vices and follies of mankind, that confederate band which have the strongest influence upon the generality; and that therefore, if he be discovered to be at all connected with, or directed by them, every thing he can urge in opposition to them will only expose himself to derision. He will betray the cause that he is bound to defend; and in that tremendous day, when we must all give account of our deeds, his infidelity and treachery will rise up in judgment against him, and doom him to the severest punishment of any that will then be inflicted. He will thence discover that he is called upon for his own sake, as well as for that of others, "to be an example to

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"the believers in word, in conversation,
in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity;
giving no offence in any thing, that
the ministry be not blamed;" but
"doing," no less than saying; "all things
for the edifying" of the flock which he
is required to feed.

But who, it may be said, "is sufficient
for these things?" None of us, indeed,
in all the extent of their obligation.
"We are," my brethren, "men of like
passions with yourselves;" and our in-
firmities are often as pressing as those of
the weakest among you. But we belong
to a religion which encourages and pro-
mises to assist sincere though imperfect
endeavours. None therefore can plead
his disabilities in excuse for the negligence
of his conduct: every one can do his best;
and every one is sure that, in doing that
best, he will be as certain of divine pro-
tection, assistance, and reward, as if he
were able to reach to the sublimest heights
of perfection and excellence:—and here

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an observation suggests itself, which regards every individual among Christians. It is confessed that the clerical profession must unavoidably be exercised by persons subject to the same infirmities and errors as men of different callings. Sometimes it may happen that these infirmities and errors instead of being resisted are yielded to, and produce pernicious and scandalous effects. The result is most highly disgraceful to the guilty person; but take heed that it become not with you a source of ridicule and contempt to the religion he professes to teach. If, "while he preaches to others, he should himself be a castaway," beware that you do not, with him, reject the message of peace and reconciliation which he bears you from heaven. If sometimes "ye have this treasure in earthen vessels," remember that it is still the treasure of the kingdom of heaven; and that if, for the sake of the unworthiness of the instrument of conveyance, you reject the blessing

blessing conveyed, you are wounding not him, but your own everlasting interests. This would be the case were the teacher confessedly the most unfit for the sacred office he has assumed. How much more forcible then is the argument where his errors are venal, and his best endeavours only want the support of adequate abilities! It is then your indispensable duty to put the most favourable construction upon his intentions, to accept his labours as he designs they should operate, and to suffer them, if not to make you wiser, at least to make you better than you are. At any rate, you may depend that while you are fixing infamy and disgrace upon the teachers of your religion, you are destroying the peace of society, and gradually undermining a system upon which the welfare, perhaps the very being of the community you belong to ultimately depends; for be assured, that was there no standing order of priesthood among you, whose appointed business it is to warn you

DISCOURSE IV. 65

you of your obligations to God and man; bad as the world is, and unworthy as too many of them are, things would be infinitely worse, in every possible respect, than they are at present; and your own private temporal happiness, of which at least you must be anxious, would stand upon the most precarious and uncertain ground.

Such then being the case, ‘that the preachers of the gospel are as imperfect as other men, and therefore that every allowance should be made by their hearers for the instances of imperfection which they may frequently exhibit;’ the duties of vigilance and activity, on the one hand, and of charity, benevolence, and docility on the other, will most clearly result. Of course the possibility of avoiding the circumstance mentioned in my text, will become the easier to the preacher; and we may trust that the cause of religion will materially be benefited by such Christian exertions of the pastor and his flock.

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To

66 DISCOURSE IV.

To them, in particular, the application of the text is certainly addressed; but there will be no difficulty in extending it much farther. The caution it contains may be made useful to every one who, by his situation in life, is capable of furnishing an example to others, who are his inferiors. Every one who is in any degree of predominance or command, may, in a certain sense, be said to preach to others. Every exaction of duty we make from persons who are below us, is a particular point of doctrine we are enforcing; and whoever is entitled to make such an exaction, is under an especial and indispensable obligation to keep his own conduct guarded from irregularity and offence, to the utmost of his ability; hence it will follow, that every wicked person is inexcusable, upon the score of what he owes to society, no less than upon that of his own private interest and advantage; and perhaps, as fame and reputation are principles of such powerful influence upon

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DISCOURSE IV.

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the human mind; it would in some measure diminish the prevalence of vice and irreligion in the world, if men would consider that their example is of the utmost consequence to others; and that the truest patriot we can conceive in a community, is the man who conscientiously discharges all the duties of his station, and "lets his light so shine before men, that they may see his good works, and glorify his Father who is in heaven."

In this extended scope of my text, it will be found, that each respective relation of life will suggest a new modification of the obligation of which it reminds us; or, in other words, that every species of dominion which man can exercise over man, will furnish a motive which should influence the superior to give his authority the weight and sanction of a good and laudable example.

The man in public life is a beacon set on a hill, for the benefit of every surrounding object in the wide circle of his

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influence.

influence. The man in private life has his little field of action, where his virtues operate their effect on the few who depend upon his benevolence and friendship. In the domestic line, the poorest individual takes his share in the duties under consideration, as he appears at the head of his family; and, as a parent, has children who look up to him for protection, support, and instruction. In such a situation, how persuasive is the eloquence of a good and honest life!—how persuasive is it, I would say, even when Providence has withheld riches, has withheld wisdom and power, and confined the scene to the humble cottage and the laborious exertions of manual industry: even then much may be taught by the blameless tenor of this simple life. In truth, it is most probable that example will be the only instruction which its wants and exigencies are capable of furnishing; and, uninteresting as its lessons may appear, and contracted as their scope may be, they may

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DISCOURSE IV. 69

Lay the foundation of a virtue which will one day be a candidate for immortality, and, through the goodness of God, will finally obtain it in the kingdom of Christ; of Christ, who came to preach the gospel to the poor, the humble, and the lowly in mind and condition; to put down the wisdom of the proud and self-sufficient, and to reveal himself to babes and sucklings; to those who were converted from the dominion of sin and Satan, and who had become as little children.

The effect of example, upon all occasions, is indeed so confessedly great, that it would seem to be entirely needless to enlarge any farther on the subject. The admiration which every living instance of virtue excites in the mind of the beholder, on the one hand, and the general propensity of human nature to imitate the conduct of superiors, even when defective and erroneous, on the other, prove beyond contradiction the importance which inherently belongs to it. At the same

F 3 time,

time, however, let us beware of imagining that it is intended to establish, as the chief motive of virtuous conduct, that we might be “seen of men.” The virtue which Christianity requires of us is that which shines to our Father who is in heaven, and who “seeth in secret.” This, and this only is the virtue which we have been endeavouring to inculcate; and it is to be remarked, that it will always discover itself in our deportment towards our fellow-creatures; and, though its principal object is the favour of God, that it cannot fail to commend itself to the approbation of every inferior being. The difference between such a virtue, and the semblance assumed by the hypocrite, is this:—that the first is good; and good not evil spoken of; while the latter is the base mimic of goodness, adorning the outside, while the inward part is full of uncleanness. The latter is threatened by our Lord with repeated and most aggravated woes; the former is distinguished with

with his peculiar beatitude. It was his own declaration, that "not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven." Every precept which he delivered, was intended to influence not only our profession, but our practice ; and while his own life was the fairest transcript of his doctrines that could possibly exist upon earth, it is expressly asserted by himself, that the purpose of his mission was, that he might "leave us an example, that we should follow his steps."—Let us then endeavour to follow him in every various instance of real and unequivocal rectitude, of which he has set us so uniform and perfect a pattern ; and if in the course of our imitation we should meet with trials and difficulties, let us remember that our reward is in heaven, and that the Bestower of it is Christ himself, who has assured every true and faithful disciple, that he has gone

before to prepare a place for them, that where He is, they may be also: that "as they have been made like unto him in tribulation," have striven to resemble him in their progress through this vale of misery, they may be "made like unto him in glory," in those mansions of bliss where he for ever liveth.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE V.

CHRISTIAN POVERTY OF SPIRIT.

MATT. V. 3.

DIALOGUE

CHRISTIANITY OR PAGANISM

C. H. TAYLOR

DISCOURSE V.

ST. MATT. V. 5,

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR
THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN,

THE beatitudes or blessings with which our Lord begins his beautiful Sermon on the Mount, contain the most exact transcript of the Christian character that can be conceived in words ; each of them exhibits a distinguishing feature of it ; but the result of the whole, taken together, gives it to us finished and complete.

It may not be amiss to recite them all, with a view to their being considered in connection

connection with each other, as they may lead to a discussion of that which is the immediate subject of our present reflections, and which appears, in its principles and consequences, to involve them all.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for
“theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Bleſ-
“ſed are they that mourn, for they shall
“be comforted. Bleſſed are the meek,
“for they shall inhabit the earth. Bleſſed
“are they which do hunger and thirst
“after righteousness, for they shall be
“filled. Bleſſed are the merciful, for
“they shall obtain mercy. Bleſſed are
“the pure in heart, for they shall see
“God. Bleſſed are the peace-makers,
“for they shall be called the children of
“God. Bleſſed are they which are per-
“secuted for righteousness sake, for theirs
“is the kingdom of heaven.”

The beatitudes which follow the first, either describe the inward effects of true religion upon the mind, or the fruits which it produces in our exterior deport-
ment.

ment. They may therefore be taken in that twofold view, though with some deviation from the order in which they are recorded by the Evangelist.

The first characteristic of the faithful disciple of Christ, is poverty of spirit; that spirit of humility and mortification which becomes a fallen degenerate creature, whose constant propensities to ill, are pregnant proofs of the little reason which he has to be vain and self-conceited. This spirit is declared to be absolutely necessary to our obtaining the privileges and promises of the kingdom of heaven. With this is connected that mourning, which is mentioned in the third beatitude, as naturally arising from a lively sense of error and infirmity; and this, our Lord assures us, shall receive the comfort of pardon and acceptance, for its contrition and repentance. No consequence too, can be more direct, than that the main ambition of such a mind will be continually to make new advances in piety and religion; that

that is, in the language of the fifth beatitude, that its hunger and thirst will be after righteousness, and they will be abundantly satisfied by the assistances of the holy spirit, furnishing the means and the opportunities of growing in grace, to the full perfection of the Christian standard. Such qualities as these must proceed from inward purity of heart; and that purity will receive the highest convictions of the redeeming presence and influence of God, which in every situation, even in the bitterness of persecution (which the best of men have endured, which the Blessed Jesus himself sustained, from a misguided and perverse world) for righteousness sake, will prove their constant support and comfort in this life, and their everlasting reward in the next.

Such is the inward disposition of the true Christian. Let us next enquire into his outward deportment as here described by our Lord. In the first place he tells us, that he is meek; and this meekness

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he has blessed with the assurance of his having the peaceable, quiet, and unenvied enjoyment of the good things of this life, which the bounty of his providence may bestow upon him: he is also placable and merciful; and an ample requital of these amiable qualities is promised him, from the mercy of God, in his own behalf. His meekness and mercy are, lastly, considered as actively exerted in diffusing that peace abroad which he enjoys within, as reconciling the differences of mankind, and teaching them the great lesson of love, by the obedience to which our Lord has declared that his disciples should be known; and this noble occupation is asserted to bring him the nearest to a filial resemblance and connection with his heavenly Father, and best entitle him to the glorious privileges of the adoption by Jesus Christ.

From this summary view of the Christian character, agreeably to our Saviour's delineation of it in the beatitudes, we recur

cur to the more particular consideration of the first of them, which he lays down as the foundation and ground-work of the rest:—“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

In discoursing upon this poverty of spirit, I shall briefly consider,
1st, Its nature.

2dly, Its reasonableness and excellence.

3dly, And the happy consequences which result from possessing it.

I. Poverty of spirit is that rooted humility of mind which uniformly prevails in every condition and situation of life; which attends prosperity as well as adversity; which is the same in a state of greatness and power as of meanness and subjection; in the enjoyment of the most abundant riches as in the endurance of the most extreme poverty. In a word, which is as little dependent on our outward circumstances as if our souls were in a state of actual separation from our bodies.

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bodies. With respect to its influence upon our deportment towards God, it makes us modest, humble, contented, and resigned, under all his dispensations; thankfully to receive his blessings, and quietly to part with them whenever it is his pleasure to withdraw them: it fills us with the most transcendent ideas of his glorious attributes, opposed to our own imperfections; striking us with the deepest conviction of our entire dependence on him for constant support and assistance, though at the same time destitute of any claim to it, but through the abundance of his mercy: it convinces us of his continual interference in the affairs of this world, of his Omnipresence, which nothing can exclude, of his Omniscience, to which every thing is known, and therefore cuts off every hope of concealing our sins, or evading the necessity to repent of every transgression, and strive to reclaim our wayward inclinations from new deviations and occasions of sorrow; which, as

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they still occur from the perverseness of our nature, bring us at last to acknowledge the true and only ground upon which our hopes and salvation through Jesus Christ are founded;—namely, on his boundless love and compassion, gratuitously exerted in our behalf; and fill us with the strongest apprehensions of forfeiting, by new offences and provocations, this last resource which remains to us in our present degenerate condition.

Such is the nature of poverty of spirit, as it is concerned in our deportment towards God. In our connection with mankind, it discovers itself by a constant disposition of meekness and philanthropy to every description of persons:—In our intercourse with the great, it preserves us from endeavouring to raise ourselves to their height by any vain conceitedness of ourselves and our merits, and effectually gains us their esteem, by seeming to withdraw us from their notice. In our conduct with equals, it preserves us from assuming

assuming a superiority equally disgusting and ridiculous, and from taking offence at their deficiency in respect to us, in any instance, by teaching us to consider nothing so much our due, as that the withholding of it should be regarded as an injury; and in our dealings with inferiors in situation, it opens our eyes to the real equality of mankind, notwithstanding every apparent difference in point of accidental circumstances. Hence it divests us of all that pride and haughtiness of demeanour, that difficulty of access, that sternness of reception, that insensibility of distress, and that wantonness of refusal, which from one creature to another, labouring under common wants and infirmities, and alike dependent for protection and preservation upon the same good and gracious Being, must, in his eyes, be hateful and detestable. These considerations, which are too real to be denied by any sober and rational person, have peculiar force upon one who professes

fesses that poverty of spirit we are recommending; and therefore rarely is it known that he is drawn into any private contest or animosity with another. The dominion of self, which is at the bottom of almost every enmity which divides man and man, being greatly subdued by this Christian principle, it is extremely difficult to find a reason for rivalship and opposition, sufficiently strong to overbalance the powerful motives for concord and concession, which are always present to him. Poverty of spirit, therefore, proclaims an almost universal peace between its professor and the rest of mankind; if they should be inclined to interrupt it, it teaches us to yield every thing but our virtue, and to rely upon the justice and goodness of God to vindicate our cause; while in flagrant infringements of right, it permits us, with every reserve in favor of Christian patience, forbearance, and charity, to appeal to the laws of our country for that redress which it positively

tively forbids us to seek by our own personal means; and as it thus conciliates us to each other, it has the strongest effect upon our opinion and government of ourselves: for it entirely destroys that self-sufficiency and self-satisfaction which lead first to presumption, and afterward to the commission of every flagrant offence: it discovers to us what we are, and what we ought to be; and by clearly pointing out to us the difference between those two states, fixes our attention upon what is still wanting to perfect our moral conduct, and upon the degree of our demerit with this defect. Hence it equally urges us to watchfulness and to assiduity, and adds double force to every sense of error which arises in the course of its investigation of our spiritual condition. These principles awaken in us a consciousness of the danger of neglecting the great work of reformation, while the necessity of it is so instant and pressing, and urge us to approach the throne of grace, to obtain

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that assistance in the performing of it which it forces us to see, that we can only obtain from thence.

From all that has been said of the nature of poverty of spirit, we may easily collect that it is the direct opposite to pride; and that as the one has been proved to be highly conducive to the discharge of our duty to God, to our neighbour, and to ourselves, so the other must be a principal obstacle to our performance of it in each particular:—and this brings us to make some reflections on its reasonableness and excellence.

II. Nothing can so much recommend any quality, as its consonance to the truth and reality of things. Now, in creatures like ourselves, no temper can be so reasonable and consistent as that which is founded upon poverty and humility of spirit. For, alas! my brethren! what have we to be proud of?—Is it of our descent? Ah! let us remember that we are all sprung from a disobedient parent,

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who wantonly forfeited, for himself and his posterity, all right and title to the favour of God. Is it of our wealth or power?—Of bubbles that are liable to burst and disappear in a moment; that can neither preserve our bodies from disease, or our minds from affliction?—that are often a dangerous possession, for which we exchange our temporal and everlasting happiness?—or are we proud of our virtue? Let us take care how we depend upon this broken reed, our virtue! Is it then of this that we are vain and conceited? Where then are our fatal propensities to ill, which are perpetually fermenting in our breasts, and often break out into flagrant transgressions and offences against right, against reason, and against religion? Where are the little dirty motives which so frequently lurk beneath our most splendid actions, and debase the best effects by the unworthiness of their cause?—where are all the frequent interruptions to the consistency of our con-

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duct, that destroy the continuity of our virtuous practice, and more than counterbalance it by their heinousness and inexcusableness?—and what, after all, are our fairest pretensions to merit, on the score of our virtue, when every man's experience concurs with the express declarations of scripture, in assuring him that all that is good and praiseworthy in it is nothing of his own, but is owing to the free and effectual suggestions of the Holy Spirit, silencing the incentives of nature, and rescuing the wavering will from their contagion and corruption? Surely there was never a truth so glaringly self-evident as this, that pride was not made for man; and never was any assurance more consonant to reason and propriety than that which is contained in my text, that “blessed are the poor in spirit.” Should we see a creature, who was labouring under disease and perishing for want, and yet proud and fond of his afflictions, should we not think that he was destitute of sense

sense and understanding? On the contrary, should we see another in the same distressful predicament, who being conscious of his situation, strove by every prudent attention to relieve it, should we not suppose him to act with more consistency and propriety?—In the same manner, when we are all fully convinced of our many spiritual infirmities, and that our principles and conduct require to be viewed through the medium of divine love and mercy, from the many grievous errors and moral inaccuracies that deform them,—is it not obvious that our deportment should be humble, modest, diffident, and cautious?—that if we cannot help ourselves, we should be ready to cry out with the sinking disciples to our common Redeemer, “Lord, save us; we perish!”—and that, not at a sudden start of humility, but by an habitual sense of the dangers and necessity of our condition? And what temper of mind is so effectual for the maintaining that habitual sense as

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the poverty of spirit of my text? The consequences of which, so far as they have not unavoidably been considered in the preceding parts of my discourse, come now to be discussed in the sequel.

III. They are summarily expressed in the latter part of my text, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

There is a material difference between the being enabled to obtain, and the actual acceptance and obtaining of the privileges of that kingdom: we may be all baptized into and profess Faith in Christ Jesus; but yet, while there is any thing whatsoever in which we place our hope or confidence of safety but in him, we are only nominally his disciples, and are not those for whom he has declared his kingdom is reserved. It is to the poor in spirit, to the self-convicted publican, and not to the conceited pharisee, that the gospel is preached with the prospect of conversion and salvation: it is to those, and to those only,

only, who know that “they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,” that the Blessed Jesus will impart the riches of his grace. It is to these humble members of his little flock that he has bequeathed his ineffable peace and consolations, to sweeten their passage through this vale of misery, and to give them a foretaste and earnest of the happiness to which he has called them in a better world. It was under the delightful influence of this peace and consolation that the apostle represents his fellow-labourers in the gospel, as “troubled on every side, but not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair: persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; nay, as taking pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake.” When he was “weak,” he tells us, that then he was strong; for he could do all things through Christ strengthening him. He felt the nothingness of human nature,

and

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and the vileness of human corruptions, and the absolute necessity of mortifying the spirit, and " casting down every imagination, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." He felt that he was to learn of the meek and lowly Jesus, if he wished to find rest unto his soul; and has therefore most wisely taught us, to " let this mind be in us which was in Christ Jesus :" — a mind possessed with poverty of spirit, in its purest and highest degree, which had overcome the world in the severest conflicts and trials, and was totally and entirely devoted " to do the will of him that sent him." In a word, which was the fair example of every virtue he transcribed into his gospel; and which, in the most comfortless and cruel situations of life, clearly exhibited the beatitude of conforming to its precepts: — a beatitude which he himself has assured us is here
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only in its commencement and first beginning, but which will receiye its final consummation in the world to come;—that in his Father's house are many mansions, and that He has gone before to prepare a place for his true disciples, that where He is they may be also;—that having been associated with him in tempers and dispositions, they may be fellow-heirs with him in happiness;—that having taken up the cross, and followed him in this life, they may reign with him in glory in the next!

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seen in the countenance and fury per-
severing, but wisdom will receive the great
consecration in the world in comes; —
— seen in this He is a people who have been
subjected to the curse for this is the consequence; but
He is ready to do it; — but
comes He is ready to do it; — but
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DISCOURSE VI.

MORTIFICATION AND SELF-DENIAL.

GAL. v. 24.

DISCOURSE VI.

MORALITY AND SELF-DENIAL

Ch. 25

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Galon from person necessary or not
that had not any guidance,
-not the New Test
-not any inspiration. **GAL v. 24.** he did no more

GAL. V. 24. **THEY THAT ARE CHRIST'S HAVE CRUCIFIED**

**THEY THAT ARE CHRIST'S HAVE CRUCIFIED
THE FLESH, WITH THE AFFECTIONS AND
LUSTS.**

coupling, point of origin as it determines the
initial position of the mesocervical Region?

THE doctrines of mortification and self-denial, which are so plainly inculcated in the evangelical scriptures, have been too often considered as resolvable into figurative modes of expression, importing less than their literal meaning might suggest. But this idea of them can only be taken up by such as are alike strangers to themselves, and to the genuine spirit of the gospel.

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If we advert to our own nature, to those infirmities and corruptions which, abounding in it, have rendered the coming of a Saviour from heaven necessary to our everlasting welfare, we shall find that there is nothing said in the New Testament on the necessity of spiritual regeneration, which is too highly coloured to bear a precise interpretation.

Let us then, upon the present occasion, consider human nature as it requires the interposition of an heavenly Redeemer; and this will lead us to see the reasonableness of those precepts which were delivered by him and his inspired disciples, on the subject of the mortification of “the flesh, and the lusts thereof,”

The first point of revelation is to discover to us this important truth,—That God created the first parent of mankind in a state of spiritual purity and innocence, with a power of chusing to continue in that state, or to change it for another of corruption and sin; that accordingly,

cordingly, upon the first opportunity, he exerted that liberty, and abused it. He debased his nature, and transmitted it so debased, to all his posterity. If it be asked, why we are to be sufferers for his transgression, we must answer by a question of our Saviour, " How can a corrupt " tree bring forth good fruit ?" How could a polluted progenitor beget an offspring free from his own defilements ? and then we are to recollect, in vindication of the goodness of God, that no sooner had he fallen, than a voice from heaven proclaimed the birth of a seed of the woman to bruise the Serpent's head ; so that, if God was pleased to permit the fall of Adam, and with him that of all his descendants, he most gratuitously propounded the means of retrieving him and them from ruin, and restoring them in process of time to all that they had lost. This, in the mean while, is certain, That he voluntarily transgressed the command of God, and that the effects of his dis-

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Bedience are discoverable among us all; for, alas! a reference to our own condition will convince us infallibly of all that revelation has declared concerning it. Too plainly may we perceive that we are all born in sin, and the children of wrath. It is indeed impossible for any man who turns his eyes in upon himself, not to be sensible that his nature is deeply corrupted and degenerated from that dignity of virtue which originally belonged to it, and which he yet admires in speculation, although perpetually deserting the pursuit of it. Every thing which seems to be peculiarly ourselves, appears to have a violent propensity to wrong, a heatstrong passion for worldly pleasures and gratifications, and a shameful desertion of the practice of right, plainly as it is defined to be the line of our duty. For such is our propensity to evil, that it is pursued, against the clearest conviction of its unlawfulness and bad tendency; the knowledge of what we owe to God, to man,

man, and to ourselves; being but a poor security for our payment of the debt: All these painful reflections are very beautifully urged by our apostle in his epistle to the Romans. He considers human nature in a twofold view, as spiritual and carnal; the spiritual and better part as instructed by a law of God, which it cannot but delight in and approve of, but yet unable of itself to resist the dominion of the carnal man, which was under the guidance of a law of his members, or a fell corrupt principle, and perpetually misleading him, notwithstanding every conviction to the contrary: And this slavery to sin he very forcibly depicts, by describing himself as wholly passive in every thing that in that bondage he was forced to do. All he tells us that he could do, was to lament and acknowledge his wretchedness; to feel the want of a Redeemer, the nothingness of his own powers, and the all-sufficiency of his divine help. Here then is the final advance of man in a state of

unassisted nature; to be deeply convinced of his own misery, and though uncertain whence and how to obtain relief, in the lowliest humility to confess his own helplessness and necessity. “Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death,”—this state of moral darkness and dereliction, this death of the soul to the glories of heaven.

Yet wretched as human nature is, let us not suppose that its ruin is sealed for ever. Father of Mercies, thou canst, and thou wilt, yet deliver it from the darkness of the shadow of death! No sooner dost thou behold it awakened to a sense of its misery, than thou discoverest its Redeemer to it. Already is he born, already does he appear to rescue it from ruin. Thy incarnate Son presents himself to our enraptured view, born in our nature, that his divine nature may have a birth in us!

And here, my brethren, the important part of our subject occurs. Here must we

learn what are the conditions upon which this adorable Redeemer has interposed in our behalf. For this purpose, let us recollect what the bondage is from which he is to redeem us. Is it not from our corrupt nature, with all its propensities and lusts, the vile inheritance bequeathed to us by our disobedient parent? If then you would enquire what is the first step to your regeneration, or life in Christ, recur to the text which I have offered to your consideration: there you will learn, that — “ they that are Christ’s have “ crucified the flesh, with the lusts there-“ of,” have entirely destroyed the whole body of sin, and risen to a new and better life of righteousness. If the means of operating this change are next sought for, we shall not fail of finding them in the gospel; there our Lord himself will tell us that we must be born of the Holy Spirit, in order to our entrance into the kingdom of heaven; and that spirit, he also assures us, his Heavenly Father will

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give to them that ask him. All then we have to do is sincerely to desire his assistance, devoutly to pray for it, and to make the best use of it we can; and then we may depend that our growth in Christ will gradually be advanced, and the great work of regeneration be finally accomplished in our natures, spirits, and dispositions. *εἰτὶ αἱ σημεῖα τοῦ πίστεως οὐκέτι*
And this brings us directly to the reasonableness of the precept which occurs in any text: for since we see that we are naturally enslaved to sin, and that our blessed Lord came into the world to redeem us from its power as well as its punishment, no criterion can be so just and so conclusive for our having been spiritually benefited by him, as the destruction of that flesh and of those lusts which lead us to the commission of sin; and no inference can be clearer, from our own condition and the nature of his mission, than that, until it be crucified and destroyed, we cannot be his true and faithful

ful disciples, nor pretend to any of the realities and privileges of that salvation, of which he is the Author, Propounder, and Bestower ; and therefore that the most accurate knowledge, and the warmest profession of religion, can be of no avail to him whose flesh remains unmortified, and whose lusts still predominate and prevail, in the general tenor of his life. It is "by our fruits," our Lord assures us, that we shall be "known," shall be judged, and condemned or acquitted ; and every doctrine that opposes this, can have no other tendency than to mislead and deceive us, in particulars of the last importance to our present and future happiness.

From all that has been said we may conclude, that the best frame of mind in which a Christian can be, is constantly to remember that he bears about him a fallen and a degenerate nature, ever inclined to go wrong, while all his better powers are unable to combat its propensities.

ties without the assistance of Heaven; that assistance he knows has been most signally proffered by the mediation of Jesus Christ; and the terms upon which the benefits of it may be obtained, he can never lose sight of. Such a sense as this will induce him to be always on the watch against the effect of his disposition to ill, to mistrust his own resistance of it (which he must frequently have experienced to be inadequate and ineffectual) and to have recourse to the throne of grace, by earnest and repeated supplication offered in a spirit of the lowest self-abasement, and with the most thorough confidence in the efficacy of his Redeemer's love and goodness. Such a habit of thinking and acting, will infallibly tend to the crucifying of the flesh and its lusts, in the truest evangelical sense of the expression. The commencement of it may be indeed painful and difficult, in a very great degree. When the flesh is in its vigour, and lust and passion are boiling with all their

their native ardour, the resistance of them is a warfare of the most laborious kind; and, in spite of every effort, it is highly probable that they will sometimes have the victory; but if our constancy be unshaken in the conflict, the victory will be only for a moment, the prize be wrested from them, and each succeeding skirmish prove more and more in our favour than the former:—every new exertion we make will be doubly strengthened from above, and we may depend that finally we shall triumph over all our enemies; and when once we have gotten the mastery, it is incredible from what a bondage we shall have been delivered. Picture to yourselves the condition of a man enslaved to the flesh, and given up to obey every lust and passion that are engendered in it. View him bereft of fortune, health, strength, and spirits, languid, diseased, melancholy, gloomy, and desperate, contemptible to himself and to others; unfit to live, and still more unfit to die; burdened

burdened with reflections on the past, and unable to relieve the future ; curbing his propensities, but still blindly attached to them ; conscious that he is in open rebellion against God, but too guilty to think of him for a moment, or to hope for his pardon ; plunging every instant into new excesses that he may forget his present misery in new scenes of debauchery and disgrace,—until at length, deserted by divine grace (after repeated advances slighted and despised) and left to the darkness and gloom of reprobation, he arrives at that dreadful inveteracy of sin, as to be able to add continually to his offences without compunction and remorse. View him, I say, in this dead sleep of insensibility, and consider him as tottering upon a precipice, standing upon the threshold of life, and just ready to be called from this world to the next. Change now the scene : lay him upon a bed of sickness ; let his last enemy set his terrors in array against him ; let his convictions be alarmed

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ed and bestir themselves, and tell what you conceive to be the sum of his torments at this agonizing moment; tell me, I say, whether it can be exceeded by any thing but that of those which they anticipate in the world to come? On the other side, cast your eyes toward the Christian who has obtained the mastery over his appetites, and who has experienced the happy influence of the religion of Jesus in his thoughts, words, and actions: See if every instant of his life does not furnish a pregnant proof of the excellency of his practice; and whether all the blessed fruits of the spirit, which the apostle enumerates in the chapter of my text, are not strikingly evident in his conduct and deportment. See and admire his boundless love, his long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance, and behold the delightful consequents which flow from these antecedents; his uniform joy and comfort, his unutterable peace and tranquility of mind: — a joy

joy and peace which the world can neither give nor take away; which are superior to every thing adverse and unfortunate in this life; which triumph over death itself, and will receive their final consummation in the mansions of eternity.

This it is, my brethren, to belong to Christ, to have put on Christ, to have crucified our own flesh with the affections and lusts, to have grafted his heavenly tempers in our natures; to have set our affections on things above, and not on things on the earth; to have had respect unto the recompence of reward; to have pressed forward to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ; to have contended for, and to have obtained an inheritance unfading in the heavens, as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ! To these inestimable privileges let us all aspire with steady and earnest purpose of heart; and let us earnestly implore our Heavenly Father to enable us to obtain them in his own good time, through the merits, mediation, and satisfaction of his ever blessed Son.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE VII.

**SACRED HISTORY REPLETE WITH
INSTRUCTION.**

I COR. X. 11.

DISCOURSES. NO.

EDWARD HENRY REEDMAN WITH
INTRODU^CTION

1 COR. x. 11

DISCOURSE VII.

I COR. X. 11.

NOW ALL THESE THINGS HAPPENED UNTO
THEM FOR ENSAMPLES; AND THEY ARE
WRITTEN FOR OUR ADMONITION, UPON
WHOM THE ENDS OF THE WORLD ARE
COME.

ST. Paul, having found that the Corinthians indulged themselves in many irregularities of conduct, with the hope of impunity from their partaking in the Christian sacraments, thought it highly expedient to give them a lively example, from the Jewish history, of the folly and danger of such an opinion.

“ Moreover, brethren,” says he, “ I would not have you ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud,

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“ and

“ and passed through the sea; and were
“ all baptized unto Moses in the cloud
“ and in the sea; and did eat all of the
“ same spiritual meat, and drank all of
“ the same spiritual drink (for they drank
“ of that spiritual rock that followed
“ them; and that rock was Christ”— a
type of him from whom every spiritual
gift should flow) “ but yet with many of
“ them God was not well pleased, for
“ they were overthrown in the wilderness.
“ Now these things were our examples,
“ to the intent that we should not lust
“ after evil things, as they also lusted.
“ Neither be ye idolaters, as were some
“ of them; as it is written, The people
“ sat down to eat and drink, and rose up
“ to play. Neither let us commit for-
“ nication, as some of them committed;
“ and fell, in one day, three-and-twenty
“ thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ,
“ as some of them also tempted, and were
“ destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur
“ ye, as some of them also murmured,
“ and

" and were destroyed of the destroyer.
" Now all these things happened unto
" them for ensamples, and they are writ-
" ten for our admonition, upon whom
" are come the ends of the world;" the
last compleutive dispensation of religion,
in which every former type and represen-
tation was closely concentrated and finally
consummated.

It is to be remarked, that every in-
stance of Jewish transgression quoted by
the apostle, was referable to their luxu-
rious appetites, and their addiction to for-
nication and idolatry; sins which seem
to have been very predominant among the
Corinthians, and therefore required to be
especially marked in his exhortations.

But although the passage in question
has a literal relation to the vices of one
particular church, yet we shall find that
the spirit of it may be extended to the
case of all christians, with equal force
and energy as to the Corinthians.

In applying it thus generally, it may be of advantage first of all to consider the Jewish history taken together, as exhibiting a system of example to us, “written for our admonition ;” and, secondly, to shew how those passages of it, recorded by the apostle, are eminent instances of this use to be made of sacred antiquity for the advancement of our spiritual interests as Christians.

I. In examining the general result of the Jewish history, we shall find it a very striking narrative of divine justice and goodness interposing to chastise the rebellious, to protect the injured and the innocent, and to relieve the distressed and the wretched, in a variety of instances, both of national and individual conduct and condition. It is true that the Jewish government was very singular in its nature, inasmuch as it was for a length of time, immediately directed by God himself; who therefore, upon many private and public occasions, clearly manifested his

his divine power, in vindicating and punishing his people, as it were, upon the spot. It is not, therefore, to be supposed that these acts of his theocracy will be exactly paralleled in ages when the final consummation of his government is to be looked for in another world: but nevertheless we should bear in mind that the apostle has told us, that "these things "happened unto them for ensamples, and "were written for our admonition." And indeed they contain such demonstrative proofs of the existence and exercise of a general and particular Providence, that one must be more than ordinarily insensible not to collect from thence additional motives and warnings for the regulation of our conduct, agreeably to the requisites of our Christian profession. And thence too we may gather the reason, why, in the accounts given us in sacred history of those pious and good personages, whom the divine spirit thought proper to hand down to the veneration and

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imitation of posterity, we find the most scrupulous attention paid to mark their defects, errors, and vices, no less than their virtues; in order that we should see human nature as it really is, and be furnished with the most authentic, complete, and instructive examples of every kind, for the correction and improvement of our own lives and those of others. Thus when the inspired penman records the corruptions, the decline, and the ruin of nations, the pious and conscientious citizen advert to the state of the community to which he belongs, marks every trait of resemblance which it bears to its devoted counterpart, and points out the coincidence to his thoughtless and licentious fellow-citizens, to alarm them if possible into repentance and amendment, by exhibiting the consequences of its arriving at a perfect similitude; or if he cannot stop the evil, to have at least the consolation of knowing that he has resisted it to the utmost of his power.

And

And thus too each single character, artlessly displayed in all its native colours of inconsistency and imperfection, calls upon every candid examiner to ask himself in every instance of default, ‘ Am not I in the same predicament with the sinner who is here described ? Have not I had equal, perhaps better opportunities of knowing my duty, and am not I as negligent in the performance of it ; and may not I fear the same direful consequences which he experienced ? For is not this the very word of God, and are not these his punishments annexed to the breach of his commands, the most explicit cautions to me to beware how I incur them ? Cautions which his mercy has given me, and for which, should I venture to despise them, his justice will call me to the severest account.’

From these general observations proceed we, Secondly, to consider how those parts of the Jewish history, recorded by

the apostle in the context, are eminent instances of the use to be made of the examples of sacred antiquity for the advancement of our spiritual interests as Christians.

The drift of the apostle's argument, we may have already seen, is briefly this: To shew how widely different the fate of many of the Jews was from that of others, although all possessed the same external privileges of divine protection and favour, without any apparent discrimination or preference. "They were all "baptized alike, and all eat of the same "spiritual food, and drank of the same "spiritual drink;" but yet "with many "of them God was not well pleased; and "overthrew them in the wilderness;" and this, because "some were idolaters, "some committed fornication, some "tempted Christ, and some murinured." A very little consideration will easily shew us that these remarks of St. Paul have a very near relationship with the conduct

conduct and condition of too many who in these days call themselves Christians. We are all equally admitted to the privileges of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; but yet what numbers there are, whose Christianity ends with those rites! nay, is confined to baptism alone, which perhaps has been only preserved from being excluded with its sister rite, by its having been received when they had not the power of refusing it. We have our idolatries as well as the Jews and the Corinthians. The world abounds with a variety of objects on whom our affections are fixed, our trust and confidence reposed, and our happiness concentrated; and where these are viewed with indifference, the proud and the vain even make idols of themselves. We too commit fornication; we tempt Christ as well as they; by discrediting his religion, by questioning his divinity, and by the presumptuous commission of crimes in contempt of his promises, and defiance of his threats.

threats. We murmur as loudly against the dispensations of Providence; the discontented charging them with injustice to themselves, the envious with partiality to others; and yet we call ourselves Christians, and trust that that empty name will ensure us all the transcendent blessings of the kingdom of heaven!—What then can be of more importance to undeceive us in our delusion, than to be told that with such, “God was not well pleased” (*i. e.* was grievously displeased) “and “overthrew them in the wilderness;” inflicted on them a punishment strongly representative of that which will await those whose conduct and profession are at variance; which will drive them from his presence to the benighted regions of desolation and despair!

There are two opposite errors which Christians are very prone to fall into with the greatest detriment to the sincerity of their religion. The one is that which we have already in some measure considered; namely,

namely, the false persuasion that a holy and virtuous life is not necessary to our salvation, in direct contradiction to the express declaration of scripture, which requires that "Every one who nameth the name "of Christ should depart from iniquity." The fact is, that Christianity claims the dominion over every moment of our lives; and he who does not keep the business of religion always in view, runs the risk of leaving it undone, and of being punished for his neglect. Indeed it is wonderful to conceive how any one should, either in speculation or practice, have doubted of the strictness of the gospel-injunctions, in respect of our moral conduct. The commission of the harbinger of our blessed Lord was to call upon mankind to "repent; for the kingdom of Heaven "was at hand;" and when it was actually come, its ministers and heralds universally preached the necessity of conversion and amendment; without which they insisted that it was impossible to be saved.

saved. In fine, our Saviour's life, as well as his doctrines, have so clearly exhibited to us what a Christian's life and principles ought to be, that one must be possessed of the most extreme folly, or the most matchless impudence, to suppose that the immoral or the irreligious person can have any share in the joys of heaven; that he who has led the life of devils in this world can expect to lead that of angels in the next.

And here the other error which I hinted at presents itself; which, though not immediately connected with our subject, it is yet of too much importance to Christians to be foreign or impertinent to any. The vainglorious idea, I mean, that such a holy and virtuous life as the best of us are capable of leading, can merit the salvation brought to light by the gospel. Without entering into any refined speculations on the nature of merit, we may be satisfied to appeal to the sad experience which every man must have of his fatal propensity

propensity to evil, and of his frequent compliance with that propensity, and then to ask if any son of Adam is destitute of the strongest proofs in himself that unregenerate and unassisted nature has nothing to boast of, in respect of its own intrinsic powers. It is divine grace alone which can strengthen our weakness, and preserve us from falling a prey to the temptations of sin and Satan; and that supernatural assistance, we must allow, precludes every idea of worth and merit in ourselves. At the same time we should remember, that the exertion of our best endeavours after righteousness is necessarily connected with a Christian sense of our disabilities, which is, in fact, only to be evidenced by our striving to get rid of them. The review of sacred history, by shewing us the depravity of human nature, in all ages, and in all persons, must confirm to us the necessity of humility and self-abasement, on the one hand, and of vigilance and of activity,

on

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the other. A similar conclusion to this our apostle has drawn from the words of my text. Having observed that "all the things" he had recounted of the Jews "happened unto them for ensamples, and were written for our admonition," he adds, "let him therefore that standeth, take heed lest he fall." An exhortation this, which applies directly to the practice of all Christians. Let us, in particular, my brethren, be seasonably admonished by the examples and precepts of holy writ, to take heed unto our ways, and to grow wise unto salvation. Above all, let us call to mind, that upon us the ends of the world "are come," the last message of mercy is given; which, if we despise, nothing remains to us but the fearful expectation of judgment. And who can abide the wrath of the Almighty? — "Who can dwell in everlasting burnings?"

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE VIII.

AN EPIPHANY SERMON.

MATT. ii. 1, 2.

MOSES. EXODUS. VI.

DISCOURSE VIII.

St. MATT. ii. 1, 2.

WHEN JESUS WAS BORN IN BETHLEHEM OF
JUDÆA, IN THE DAYS OF HEROD THE
KING, BEHOLD THERE CAME WISE MEN
FROM THE EAST TO JERUSALEM, SAYING,
WHERE IS HE THAT IS BORN KING OF THE
JEWES? FOR WE HAVE SEEN HIS STAR IN
THE EAST, AND ARE COME TO WORSHIP
HIM.

THESE words are part of a very extraordinary transaction, affirmed by St. Matthew to have happened shortly after the birth of our Lord, in Bethlehem of Judæa, where his mother Mary, agreeably to the prediction of the prophet, had

brought him forth, having resorted thither with her espoused husband Joseph, to be taxed, as one of the house and lineage of David.

The affair in question is briefly related by the evangelist in the following words :
“ When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of
“ Judæa, in the days of Herod the king,
“ behold there came wise men from the
“ east to Jerusalem, saying, where is he
“ that is born King of the Jews? for we
“ have seen his star in the east, and are
“ come to worship him. When Herod
“ the king had heard these things, he
“ was troubled, and all Jerusalem with
“ him. And when he had gathered all
“ the chief priests and scribes of the
“ people together, he demanded of them,
“ where Christ should be born? And
“ they said unto him, in Bethlehem of
“ Judæa; for thus it is written by the
“ prophet: And thou, Bethlehem, in the
“ land of Juda, art not the least amonst
“ the princes of Juda; for out of thee
“ shall

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“ shall come a Governor; that shall rule
“ my people Israel. And he sent them
“ to Bethlehem, and they departed: and
“ lo! the star which they saw in the east
“ went before them, till it came and stood
“ over where the young child was.—
“ When they saw the star, they rejoiced
“ with exceeding great joy: and when
“ they were come into the house, they
“ saw the young child, with Mary his
“ mother, and fell down and worshipped
“ him. And when they had opened their
“ treasures, they presented unto him gifts;
“ gold, and frankincense, and myrrh; and
“ they departed into their own country.”

Many striking circumstances occur in this history, as we turn our attention to the persons concerned in it; to the revelation made to them; and to their conduct in consequence of it.

However various our conjectures concerning the wise men herein mentioned may be, this at least seems to be certain, that they were neither Jews, nor descend-

ants from them. They were not Jews, but wise men of the east ; called so with respect to the land of Judæa :—nor were they descended from Jews, because that they seem to have been totally unacquainted with the prophecies of the Old Testament, which would have led them, as well as “the chief priests and scribes “of the people” at Jerusalem, to the knowledge of the particular place where Christ should be born ; and the more so, as by the evangelical account they were men of wisdom and learning, who as Jews could not have been ignorant of books, so important to them as those of the prophets must have been, from their containing a large part of those revelations which constituted the religion of that nation. They were strangers, who had no immediate connection with Judæa ; residing at a distance from it, and apparently very little interested in the history or expectations of its inhabitants. It seems likely that they were Gentile philosophers, who,

among

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among other speculative sciences, were particularly addicted to the study of astronomy, which would naturally lead them to observe any extraordinary phœnomenon in the aerial world; and, with regard to their being induced to appropriate the star or luminous appearance in the sky to the birth of a king of Judæa, it is reasonably to be supposed that their belief in this particular, their journey in consequence, and their zeal in prosecuting the design of it after their arrival in Judæa, were not owing merely to the traditional notices which might have reached some parts of the eastern countries, from the prophecies of Daniel, and that of Balaam; but must have been confirmed and strengthened, if they did not entirely originate, by some particular revelation made to themselves. Of this we may gather some proof from the confident manner in which their enquiries were made:—“Where,” say they, “is He that is born King of the Jews?—for we have seen his star

"in the east, and are come to worship
"him." Nor does it seem at all incon-
gruous to suppose that the same good and
gracious Being, who was pleased to vouch-
safe their senses the guidance of that light
from heaven, should, in like manner,
have directed their minds to that divine
object at which it pointed. At all events,
the conviction which they received was
of the strongest kind; sufficiently so as to
induce them to take a distant journey, to
find out a personage in whose appearance
upon earth they could naturally have had
no concern: but yet one to whom they
wished to pay their adorations, and to
offer the most costly productions of their
country. Having arrived at the place of
their destination, we find that they boldly
addressed themselves to the reigning pow-
er, though they were the unwelcome mes-
sengers to him of the existence of a rival
so mighty, as to have been announced to
them from heaven. From him they learn
that he was to be born in Bethlehem; and
thither,

thither, illuminated by that same star which before had alarmed them with its appearance when in their own country (and which, in all probability, had vanished after their arrival at Jerusalem, until they set out upon their second search toward Bethlehem) thither, I say, they urge their eager steps, rejoicing with exceeding great joy, at the renewal of the blessing which had before been so graciously bestowed upon them; and there accordingly they find the infant King:—not invested with any of the ensigns of royalty, or the usual concomitants of worldly grandeur, but in the mean garb and lowly circumstances of a carpenter's son:—perhaps still the tenant of that humble manger in which his wonderful life had been commenced, attended by his virgin mother, whose tender cares alone administered the services which the wants and weaknesses of his outward nature so much required. This, however, did not discourage them from crediting the persua-

sion with which they were filled of his high birth and character; for when they saw him, “they fell down and worshipped him; and opening their treasures, “poured forth unto him” those gifts which would have recommended them at the throne of a prince whose kingdom was indeed of this world; — and then, having fulfilled the purpose of their journey, they returned, exulting in their success, to their own country.

Here the sacred historian leaves us to our conjectures; saying nothing more of them, of their visit, or of the consequences which accrued from the accomplishment of the expectations which had given rise to it. Those particulars, however, which have been revealed to us, are by no means unimportant and unprofitable. The whole transaction was, to the Jews, a strong intimation of the intentions of Almighty God towards the world at large, by the advent of his only-begotten Son in the flesh; as well as no inconsiderable proof

to

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to be afterwards applied by them, when he actually entered on his public ministry, and gave such striking testimony, by his doctrines, miracles, and general deportment, of his being that great " Prophet " which should come into the world; and to Christians in general it is a beautiful illustration and example of the procedure of God, in bringing about the redemption of mankind by that blessed Son, very happily applied at this season, which is dedicated to the commemoration of his gracious call of the Gentiles. It is in this view that I propose to consider it in the sequel of my discourse:— and first, we should learn from this narration, that we can only be led to Christ, by the gratuitous illumination and interposition of God; and that unless the light of his grace darts in upon our minds, they must remain in darkness, ignorance, and doubt, and we shall be as little capable of feeling the force of, and practising the duties of the gospel in their true spirit, as " the wise men "

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"men of the east" would have been (without an intimation and sign from Heaven) to have known that a king of the Jews was born, or to have discovered him in his retreat, in Bethlehem. In the next place, we discover the wisdom no less than the goodness of God, in his revelations to man. No method could be more happily devised for awakening in the wise men of the east a conviction that some remarkable personage was come into the world, than the appearance of a star; the affording them which miraculous guidance, we find to have been managed with the most accurate and instructive skill and address. Still as they journeyed onward toward Jerusalem, its mild beams enlightened their steps, and brought them to the holy city; but there we have reason, from the evangelist's narration, to suppose that it disappeared. They were then in a situation to be instructed by Herod and the chief priests and scribes of the people, and therefore required no immediate

mediate information from heaven; but when having learnt from them that Christ was to be born in Bethlehem, they were to seek him there, and had no worldly means of discovering the particular place of his abode, we again see the star relieving their anxieties and doubts, by going before them, and “standing over where the young child was.” Hence we should collect, that we are not to look for extraordinary ways of conversion and instruction, when we possess the more ordinary means of knowing our duty: — when we “have Moses and the prophets,” and the inspired writings of apostles and evangelists to call us to repentance, we must not expect that our Lord will work a miracle unnecessarily in our behalf. On the other hand, we learn not rashly to suppose, that because some part of mankind do not enjoy the same advantage that we do, they are destitute of other spiritual assistances which do not meet our observation; and that in God’s good time, they will all be brought

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brought to the full and perfect knowledge of Christ, in that way which seemeth best to his wisdom and goodness ; which, as to the wise men in the gospel, will point out a star to the stranger who is removed from the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, and lead him by its heavenly light to his hitherto-unknown Redeemer. In the next place, we are led to consider the terms of the salvation proposed to us by Christ Jesus, exhibited to us in the circumstances of the history we are examining. Reflect for a moment on the external condition of the persons who were in quest of the new-born King, and on that of the object of their pursuit. Behold, I say, the wise men of the east, at the feet of the helpless Babe of Bethlehem ! Behold them lavishing on Him all the riches of the earth ! and Him, with the indifference natural to his age, receiving unmoved the most splendid testimonies of their reverence and regard ;—and see, in this striking picture, the liveliest representation

that

that can be given of the spiritual nature of that religion which “ casteth down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringeth into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” Where was the science and philosophy of those sages of the world, when they were conducted by the powerful impulse of divine grace, to the cradle of the infant Jesus, there to pay him the lowliest homage and submission of eastern slaves ! and, in like manner, what are all the most refined and profound researches of human reason, in respect of that mystery of redemption which God alone hath wrought for us, and which He alone could reveal to us ! — and where are the grounds upon which pride and vanity can support themselves, under the humiliating consideration that self-denial, and the renunciation of the fallen world, which nourishes and flatters them, are essentially necessary to our being admitted into that kingdom

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Kingdom of Heaven, which is prepared for those who have been converted from their infidelity, and become like little children !

Lastly, in applying this passage to the solemnity to which it has been appropriated; we have reason, in all humility and reverence, to adore the divine goodness for his gracious purpose of communicating the blessings of the gospel to all the fallen race of men, Gentiles as well as Jews, intimated so immediately after the birth of our Lord, the glorious instrument of it, in the transaction before us: — a purpose which St. Paul describes as “ a mystery which, in other ages, was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit ; ” and which the self-sufficient and vainglorious temper of the Jewish nation would not permit them to credit, even when induced to embrace the outward profession of Christianity ! But, thanks be to God ! “ whose gifts and calling are without repentance,”

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"ance," their opposition and resistance have availed nothing against its fulfilment; — we ourselves are, at this day, a living proof of the reality of its accomplishment: — the Sun of Righteousness hath arisen upon us also: — the day-spring from on high hath visited us, who own ourselves to be the descendants of those who were overwhelmed "in the darkness of the shadow of death; having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their hearts." Have we, then, been the objects of the boundless love and mercies of God, and shall we not endeavour to approve ourselves to them? Shall we not be induced to imitate our Gentile brethren of the east, in the zeal, alacrity, and joy with which they sought out and found the Saviour who was revealed to them? or will we despise their noble example, and though we are taught from Heaven how and where we are to search for him,

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him, shall we stop short in the pursuit, or be discouraged from undertaking it, and turn back upon our own country of corruptions, trespasses, and sins? Have they not convinced us, that our work is not performed to our hand, without some efforts of our own, and that God, who "hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ," expects them to be converted and devoted to him, ere we can arrive at the heavenly Jerusalem, and the mansions of his blessed Son; and can we yet linger upon our journey, and trifle with the opportunities which are offered us of finishing it with success? — Opportunities which will not long continue, and which will soon be lost, never to return. The star which now shines in our firmament, will set in endless night, and all our hopes will expire with our lives. Then will the curtain of delusion be withdrawn, and the undeniable certainties of another world be

be clearly manifested to our sight. Sooner or later they will reach us all, and excite sensations correspondent to the manner in which we have prepared ourselves for them, while yet we "walked by faith, " and not by sight." You, my brethren, I trust, will not require that these truths should be farther enforced upon you: I shall therefore conclude, with beseeching you to remember, that every warning which ye now receive and neglect, will hereafter be an aggravation of your crime and your punishment; and that it has been declared to us by the mouth of an apostle,—the apostle to the Gentiles,—that "if we sin wilfully, after that we "have received the knowledge of the "truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

time of my life or last night I made
such a mess, I am afraid that will cost me
in reprints etc or subscriptions again, but
not enough to bring you out over due.
What you will do with your
subscription you will find in my first
quarterly issue and since we have just
had our second meeting at the
University of Michigan, I am sending you a
copy of the first issue of the
Michigan State University Journal of
Education. This is a quarterly journal and
will be published in October and
March. It is a good journal and
I hope you will like it.

DISCOURSE IX.

UPON CONSCIENCE.

Acts xxiv. 25.

L 3

discovered in
the collection

Acte XXII. 27

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ACTS XXIV. 25.

AND AS HE REASONED OF RIGHTEOUSNESS,
TEMPERANCE, AND JUDGMENT TO COME,
FELIX TREMBLED; AND ANSWERED, GO
THY WAY FOR THIS TIME; AT A CONVE-
NIENT SEASON I WILL CALL FOR THEE.

TH E great Apostle to the Gentiles, having been sent for by Felix the Roman governor of Judæa, to be heard concerning the faith in Christ, for which he was then a prisoner in bonds, through the unjust malice of his countrymen the Jews, took occasion to address him on those subjects, which he foresaw would most deeply interest his heart and attention, by being particularly applicable to

himself. He reasoned with him of righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come ; considering him as seated in his government, by the side of his Drusilla, besieged by opportunities of rapacity, injustice, and inordinate lust, which it was his duty to arm him against, by reminding him of the obligations of the opposite virtues, and of the certainty of a future judgment, when they should be rewarded and their relative vices be punished by the God who judgeth rightly. The governor heard him, and felt the force of his admonitions, but felt it only to elude it :— the shaft was too well pointed to miss its aim ; too keen not to smart ; and he was too vulnerable not to be wounded. But long a prey to the passions which the apostle was condemning, he could not endure that they should be attacked. Bound to them in the fetters of inveterate custom and habit, he regarded them with a cordial affection, and hastily put a stop to a combat, against which his partiality protested with

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with all the eloquence of self-love. In spite of every thing; however, he could not avoid trembling :—the divine spirit which gave the blow, directed it home to the dark recesses of his mind, and roused up that latent principle which has been planted in the soul of every man by the divine Author, to point out and lead to that which is good, and to deter from that which is evil, and which, in the worst of men, lives under every effort to extinguish it.—Conscience, that secret witness of Heaven, which was to be found even in the breast of a Roman governor, roused it up, I say, from its state of inactivity, and gave it power enough to break through the strong bulwarks which the spirit of this world had raised against it, and shake his heart in its remotest citadel. Here preventing grace had done its benevolent part ;—that part which it performs indiscriminately to Christians, to Jews, Turks, and Infidels, often unheeded among the highest, but sometimes prevailing even

among the lowest of these designations. The God of Mercy had vouchsafed to visit him unsought, and to prepare the means of his correction and amendment; farther the liberty which he has granted to man cannot admit that he should go; the efforts of the sinner must then be exerted to second, and to concur in the gracious interposition of his Redeemer;— otherwise the Holy Spirit, vexed and resisted, withdraws its celestial influence from the soul, and gives it back to that horrid tranquility and torpitude which it had just began to disturb; and which, if duly attended to, it would at length totally dispel, and leave room for that vigilance and activity which become the Christian and the man, to resume their dominion over the soul, and restore it to its wonted vigour and health. Such was the case of Felix:— touched to the quick by the remonstrances of God, speaking to him through the organs of Paul, he trembled indeed, and felt their force; but it was because

because he could not resist it; for when his will was to exert itself, and he should have humbled himself, under the compunction which wrung his heart, and sought an occasion of being farther reprobated and instructed by the apostle, we find him deplorably deficient and backward; nay, that he even rejected the advances which had been made him, and deprived himself of all opportunity of acquainting himself with the truth, and profiting by it:—"Go thy way," says he, "for this time:—when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." And here that our reflections on the history of Felix, as recorded in the verse under consideration, have led us thus far, it may not be unprofitable to enlarge the scope of our subject, and to consider the case of men in general, where it resembles the particular one which has just employed our thoughts, and to take notice of such practical inferences as may present themselves in natural consequence. And that

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the condition of most men is similar in many respects to that of Felix, in the point of view in which the evangelist presents him to us; that each of us has his apostle to reason with him, and an alternative afforded him of listening to his reproofs, or of rejecting them, every candid observer cannot but confess; who that has penetration enough to search into the secrets of his own heart, but finds there a feature of that image of God (in which our first parent was created, but which he defaced by listening to the suggestions of a corrupt will) a principle of divine life which the free grace and goodness of God have left to all the fallen race of Adam, to combat the strugglings of that depraved nature which his fatal disobedience has transmitted to his descendants; a moving power, distinguished by various appellations,—by that of reason, of conscience, of grace; but designing the same thing, an inward check existing in the human mind, powerfully restraining every deviation

deviation from good and every tendency to evil, dictating what is right, and branding what is wrong with its true and indelible character? — This preacher of righteousness, assiduous to enforce the doctrine which he is commissioned to inculcate, never fails to speak inly to every man, and to furnish him with an occasion of knowing his duty and amending his ways. In the better part of mankind, whose will inclines to its right bias, his remonstrances produce their due effect: the apostle reasons, and the disciple listens with conviction; invites him to repeat his lessons, and grows wise unto salvation; and even in the worst of men, his protesting voice cannot be silenced, his resistance be borne down, ere it makes a long and vigorous effort. Ask the sanguinary ruffian or the midnight adulterer, whether they have ever performed their deed of darkness, without feeling something within that stayed their purpose;— something that seemed to unnerve and stop them for a moment, when most resolute

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solute to perform it. The apostle preaches, and they cannot but tremble; the moment is critical, and they have still the opportunity of correction and amendment open to their choice; but perverse will and corrupt nature rushing in with new violence, dismiss the preacher, and perpetrate the deed. The generality of us, who do not correspond to the description of the better or the more vicious part of mankind, are yet strongly depicted in the portrait of Felix. There is a spirit prevailing in all of us, the direful characteristic of our fallen nature, which diverts us from our duty and devotion to God, and manifests itself in a thousand forms of earthly corruption, which it communicates to our thoughts and affections, and of course to our actions. In every case, however, the internal monitor is sure to interpose, and loudly to remonstrate against the vanities we are seeking after, and audibly to declare the substantial good which we ought to pursue;

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fue ; the spirit of God, which is bestowed in a certain degree on every disciple of Christ, the holy scriptures which afford ~~us~~ general illumination and instruction, all join in recalling us from the follies of this world, and in bidding us to set our affections on things above. We cannot avoid feeling the amplest conviction of the truth of their admonitions, and form a momentary resolution to obey them ;— but no sooner is it made than a temptation occurs, and we evade the execution of it :— “ Go thy way,” we say with the governor, “ for this time ; at a convenient season,” an opportunity which we cannot, which we do not wish to command, perhaps I may “ send for thee.” Time steals away with our lives, during this dangerous system of delay ; the spirit of the world predominates, and the business of religion remains incomplete, till every opportunity of performing it is lost in the approach of death : a visitant whom we are all bound to expect, and who often

ten comes to us without the warning of a single pain. When his visit is less abrupt, though always certain, when it is preceded by wasting distemper and the tedious languors of a sick bed, we then feel what we were blind in not seeing from the earliest dawn of our spiritual life, that we were not born into this world to be ruled by our passions, and to obey no law but our own corrupt inclinations; we then are convinced that it should have been the study of our lives to please and obey the God who created and redeemed us, and that therefore every thought, word, or deed, which did not promote that purpose, was unlawful or inexpedient; it is then we know how to value the importance of our time, and pass in mournful review the many hours we have lost or misspent! Pursuits which we once conceived to be innocent, we now find to have been otherwise, for this evident reason, because they obstructed the performance of better things at one time, or indisposed

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disposed the mind for them at another. The world we discover to be a dangerous seducer, whose humours and manners we have been complying with and imitating at the greatest hazard. Has it taught us to love pleasure? We learn that it has led us out of our way in pursuit of it, and brought us to the very opposite point to that we are in quest of. Has it bidden us to love knowledge, and to court science as our supreme good? Alas! we are deeply sensible that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; and that the beginning, as well as the perfection of true wisdom, is the fear of God. Has it persuaded us that religion was an empty name, which priesthood has invented as an instrument to enslave mankind; or a trifling service easy to be performed, and such as might be assumed at any moment of leisure, indolence, or inclination? 'Tis then that we are forced to confess that its obligations are real and important, and its demands comprehending the whole scope

scope of human powers and human life. Convinced by the strongest evidence, that we are placed in this world as in a state of continual probation, introductory to another, which will be either a world of endless happiness or misery, as we act in obedience or opposition to certain laws which are propounded to us, and rendered easy and practicable by various assistances afforded by the divine Legislator, in inference from those laws which constitute the essence and end of religion, cannot be trifled with but at the risque of losing that happiness and incurring that misery; and that our ignorance of them cannot be urged as a reasonable excuse for our disobedience, when it has been the consequence of our own negligence and perverseness. Revolving thus, at this season of sober reflection, the general tenor of our former conduct, and estimating things by their true value, we at length bear witness to the truth of the Preacher's declaration that " all is vanity and vexation
of

DISCOURSE IX. 161

" of spirits ; that every thing in this world which has not some reference to the interests of our better and spiritual part, is not worth the pursuit ; and when pursued in preference to them, must end in disappointment and danger, if not in ruin. The most consistent result of these convictions, is the deepest contrition and repentance for having so long acted in opposition to them. But of what avail these can be with that Being to whom we have denied the service of our health and vigour, which he has bestowed upon us, to be dedicated to himself, and are now offering the spiritless remnant of a languishing existence,—He alone, who is love and goodness itself, can determine. At any rate, the experiment is hazardous, and the event uncertain : so that he who has deferred the business of reformation and amendment to the hour of his dissolution, takes it up at that time under the most unfavourable circumstances ; when its increased difficulties, and his own diminish-

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ed powers, struggling under the infirmities of his body; and the doubts, suspense, and apprehensions of his mind, promise the most obstinate combat, and the worst success.

Let each one of us, my brethren! who have been considering the present case and the reflection it has suggested, derive at least this advantage from them, while yet we are in health, and looking forward to the end of life with a hope of its being at a distance from us, to be induced in the retirements of our closets, in those moments when the mind looks in on itself, and has no witness of its meditations but the God who is ever present, to ask yourselves a few questions; which you may be assured are of the utmost importance :—‘ Have I lived as if I had a sincere desire to please God, and a due sense of his goodness and mercy to me, and to all men? Have I improved the means of religious instruction and reformation which have been vouchsafed to me? Or

‘ rather,

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' rather, has not religion occupied only a
' secondary place in my thoughts and af-
' fections ? Have not I supposed it to be
' mere external formality, which, if but
' observed by the outward man, required
' no conversion and devotion of the in-
' ward ? Have not I indulged myself in
' every wayward inclination, and rioted
' in every unlawful pleasure, as if this
' world was the only scene of action in
' which I was to appear, or, as if the
' transaction of it had no influence on
' the determination of the next ? Upon a
' candid examination of my conduct, do I
' think myself right in the plan I have
' adopted ? On the contrary, have I not
' been acting, all my life, against the con-
' viction of my own mind, and in despite
' of the remonstrances of my God, speak-
' ing inwardly to my soul, upon every oc-
' casion of temptation ? And at the close of
' my life, shall I not wish that I had acted
' otherwise than I have done ? And, may
' not the next moment be my last, and

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death

' death at once deprive me of the small-
' est interval for repentance and amend-
' ment? And after death, what is to be-
' come of me? Can I sport with eterni-
' ty as I have trifled with time? Can I
' elude the penetration of Almighty wis-
' dom, and the scourge of Almighty Pow-
' er and Justice, as I have concealed my-
' self from human observation and cor-
' rection? And after all, what can I gain
' by hazarding such important concerns?
' And, what may I not lose, by neglecting
them?

Your own consciences, my brethren, will furnish an answer to every question of this kind, at the instant of its being proposed; and you may believe me, that the report which it makes may be depended upon: if it acquits you, persevere in the course it approves, and try yourselves from time to time by that oracle of truth which God himself has afforded you, as the constant guide and assistant of your spiritual warfare, and obey it upon all occasions:

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occasions: if it accuses you, receive its reproaches with humility, and hasten to appease it, by reforming the errors it condemns: think not, that you can ever effectually banish it from you, or silence its suggestions; for be assured, that tho' the clamours of the world, the flesh, and the Devil, may make you disregard or forget them for the present, a time must come —the hour of death and the day of judgment — when you will be forced to remember and acknowledge them with the most direful conviction, and by the most fearful consequences.

DISCOURSES

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DISCOURSE X.

A LENT SERMON.

THESS. iv. 7.

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PICCOLESSE
A TELLA ASSUMPTION

111

DISCOURSE X.

THESS. iv. 7.

GOD HATH NOT CALLED US TO UNCLEAN-

NESS, BUT UNTO HOLINESS.

THERE is no fact more undeniable, than that it is the professed business of Christianity to produce entire moral conversion in the human mind; — to amend it in every instance as far as its finite nature can admit of: this is, in truth, one of the strongest internal evidences of its authenticity we can desire; for the experience of every man must convince him of the wretchedness of his condition, and that that wretchedness is especially derivable from the sinfulness of his

nature. If therefore he is led to hope that the divine goodness will interpose for his relief, he must of course imagine that he will retrieve him from that wretchedness, by rescuing him from the dominion of sin. Now that, we see, is pre-eminently the design of Christianity ; which is therefore proved to be a revelation highly worthy of the divine Author, and constituted upon the precise principles which we should previously, have been inclined to attribute to communications of such an Author.

Not a page of the New Testament can be open, without discovering a variety of precepts inculcating the pursuit of virtue, and dissuading from the practice of vice. The passage before us speaks a language, which is everywhere re-echoed to us through the sacred volume ; every instance of moral conduct we find there diligently animadverted on, in order to its amendment :— And, would we wish to characterize the gospel in all its parts,

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by one comprehensive observation, we might find some difficulty in doing it more effectually than in the words of my text: “ God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness.”

If we critically examine the context, we shall be led to believe that the apostle, by uncleanness, may primarily refer to one particular species of vice; but, as the word Holiness, to which it is opposed, is of a very general meaning, we may, without impropriety, extend the sense of uncleanness to import — wickedness and impiety, in their most diffusive application.

Upon these grounds we shall proceed to a more minute discussion of my text.

In the first place, We find that God may, in his gospel, be said to have called or invited us: — and most justly indeed is this asserted of him! For it was man that had alienated himself from that only source of every actual and possible happiness he was capable of enjoying. The principle

principle which actuated all the dealings of God with him, has been the most unbounded condescension, benevolence, and love; and it was originally in his power to have obeyed the divine command, and never to have forfeited his favour and the consequent happiness of Paradise; but the liberty of will, with which he is unavoidably gifted, to make him an accountable agent, he grossly abused to his own destruction; yet here he was not left to the miseries he had so wantonly incurred; the divine mercy interposed, and sent a Redeemer, to wash out the pollutions of his nature in the blood of that same nature he assumed, to atone for its transgressions. It was that blessed Redeemer, even our Saviour Jesus Christ, by whom God has called us. "Come unto me," says this divine Mediator of the new covenant: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Here every wretched son of Adam may find the relief he so greatly wants. Here
is

the “ Fountain opened for sin and un-
“ cleanness ; ” for the use and advantage
of every one who is himself inclined to
“ wash and be clean.” He that cometh
will in nowise be rejected ; he that is at
a distance will be kindly invited ; and if
he even slighteth the first advances, they
will be repeatedly renewed, and never
discontinued, till it becomes morally im-
possible that they should produce their in-
tended effect. Various are the means of
grace which await every one of us. The
beneficent scheme of revelation lies open
to our view in its sacred records ; where
he that runs may read his duty in all its
parts ; nor can ever want the ability to
understand what he reads, while he brings
a willing mind to his labours, and is ready
to implore that assistance of the Holy Spi-
rit which his own deficiencies may render
necessary. The wisdom which qualifies
us for salvation, is within the reach of
the meanest of our Lord’s disciples ;—his
call is intelligible to the grossest ear ; and
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he only is incapable of profiting by its tenor who “refuseth to hear the voice of “the charmer, charm he ever so wisely.”

In the second place, We are taught not to mistake concerning the purpose of the call which God addresses to us by him. “God,” says the apostle, “has not called us to uncleanness”. It is hardly possible to suppose, that there ever has been a sincere Christian who has professed to believe that the spirit of the gospel was consistent with any immorality of conduct. Those whose lives are given up to vicious practices, are Christians but in name, and therefore are not to be taken into the present account. But there have been some sober, well-disposed persons who, from a rigid and partial interpretation of certain passages of scripture, and a misconception of the tendency of some of its doctrines, have seemed to assert, that the conduct of men had no influence upon their everlasting destination.

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They find, that the gospel speaks home to the infirmities of human nature, in its best condition, and bids us to be humble under every possible, moral, and religious acquirement ; inasmuch as “ after we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants ”; and further, that under every imperfection, it most liberally proposes to us the means of everlasting salvation ; and thence they have inferred, that they are offered so gratuitously and conditionally, that the little virtue we can acquire must be wholly immaterial to the obtaining of it. But this is, in fact, to argue wrong from right principles. It is undoubtedly true that it is the grace of God, the pure and unmerited grace of God, which has appeared unto all men, as the only medium thro’ which they can be redeemed from ruin ; but then, shall we conclude that, if the best of us are far gone from righteousness, the worst of men, the profligate and vicious of every degree, can prefer the same claim,—not upon the justice,

tice, but the mercy of God, as those who use their utmost endeavours to obtain it, however imperfect they may prove to the purposes of virtue? Such an inference is irrational, inconsistent, and impious; and those persons who give us reason to draw it from their premises, are not aware how much further its evil tendencies may be carried. From thence the wicked may acquire a species of reason to go on in their wickedness with the hope of impunity, nay even with triumph: their criminal indulgences are by no means destructive of their expectations of salvation: divine mercy is still their dependence, as well as that of the mortified and self-denying Christian: and thus, contrary to reason and every assertion of scripture, God is made, if "not to call us to uncleanness," at least to favour us in it. The apostle's negative is therefore highly important against such errors as these we are considering; and convinces us that, however humbly we are to think of our most

most strenuous efforts after religious perfection and purity, we are still bound to make them, if we wish to be of the number of those whose call will be effectual to salvation.

And this leads me to consider, 3dly, The last assertion of my text, viz. that "God has called us unto holiness."

There is nothing in the gospel which is incomplete or inconsistent;—the regulations it enjoins are of no partial or unequal nature;—when it commands us to "cease to do evil," it requires us "to learn to do well;"—when it declares to us that "God has not called us to uncleanness," it adds, "but he has called us unto holiness." That holiness, we should observe, is of the most comprehensive meaning; extending to every instance of mental and practical purity which can possibly be conceived:—"Be ye perfect," says our Blessed Saviour, "as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect;"—that

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by propounding to us the divine excellence as the standard of our imitation, we may be convinced that there is not the least room left for the indulgence of wilful transgressions, upon any occasion whatsoever. But let us not imagine, that in calling us to such an imitation he has required that which is too dazzling and transcendent for our capacities; for we should remember upon that score, that the pattern in question has been, as it were, levelled to our comprehension, by being exhibited to us through the medium of our Blessed Saviour, “the brightness “of his Father’s glory, and the express “image of his Person;”—his brightness veiled under the garb of humanity, his image softened and attempered to the faculties of a finite nature! If to him we turn our attention, we shall find what is the “holiness” to which “God has called “us;”—his life and his doctrines mutually assist us in developing all the varieties of moral excellence which it comprehends.

Upon

Upon every scene of action on which the evangelical historians present him, the most perfect consistency appears, without any of those extraordinary and direct displays of his divinity, which might seem to forbid our imitation. On the contrary, if we except the miracles he performed, and consider only the moral tendency of his life, we shall perceive that it exhibits a pattern which may be followed by us in a very great degree. In like manner, the doctrines he delivers are such as most aptly accord with our reason, and engage our approbation from the moment that they are apprehended; not a vice can rear its head, but is there condemned; not a virtue exist, but is there stamped with the divine sanction. If in some instances the frailty of human nature is surprized at the little concession which is made to itself, conscience and reason applaud the rigour of the discipline, and own, that were it more relaxed, it would be less perfect and less conducive to happiness. If

we are commanded "to bear our cross," and "to love them that hate us, and de-spitefully use us and persecute us;"—if we are commanded, I would say, to sacrifice present gratifications to future hopes, and to abandon resentments which seem congenial to our nature when excited by injury,—how thoroughly are we convicted of the propriety of such precepts, by the experience we must all have, that those gratifications lead only to misery; and that self-denial is itself productive of present comfort, no less than of that future happiness which is promised us; and that anger and revenge are as unworthy of a rational creature, and as incapable of affording him satisfaction, as charity and forgiveness are becoming his nature, and the most certain sources of unadulterated peace and consolation of mind. He, therefore, who subscribes to the conditions, and is a candidate for the rewards of Christianity, must remember, that every thing which his conscience, in
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the calmest moments of reflection, can dictate to him to be wrong, is essentially incompatible with such profession and hopes ; every thing which it urges to be right, is indispensably necessary to both. He must remember, too, that it is not enough for him to own himself to be in an error, and to intend to amend ; but that it is his duty, from the moment of his conviction, to set about his reformation, and pursue it to the utmost of his ability ; and if he finds himself unequal at first to struggle against the influence of bad and inveterate habits, he must still pursue the conflict with all his might ; and with sincerity and fervency of mind, implore the divine assistance to enable him at length to overcome them. “ Ask and ye shall have,” is one of the promises of our Blessed Saviour to his disciples ; and he who has learnt to pray to God to further and support him in his progress to virtue, and who has practised this lesson with any degree of perseverance

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and integrity, may depend that he will feel the happy effects of it upon his thoughts, words, and actions :—he will be practically convinced, that God has indeed called us to holiness ; that he is himself obeying that call; and that, in so doing, he is pursuing his best and most lasting interest and advantage.

From all that has been urged, we find, that though we are called by God thro' Christ to the most invaluable privileges, it is upon certain conditions, which bind our practice beyond the possibility of their being over-ruled. These conditions, we have seen, are such too as we cannot but approve upon the principles of our rational nature which should influence our conduct, were there no such glorious revelation of the divine will as has been made to us in the gospel. No one, therefore, can pretend to get rid of them, by renouncing the privileges dependent on them ; for, if he ceases to own their obligation, he must cease to be a man, and degenerate

degenerate to a brute. Christianity, then, from the moment that it is propounded to us, fixes itself upon us, by a bond which can never be broken, by the bond of our nature; and where it is resisted and rejected, we are condemned already, though it were even possible to waive the penalties which it has annexed to the disobedience of its precepts. What then remains for every reasonable being, but diligently to study its requisitions, and cheerfully to obey them in all their extent? — And at no time, surely, can we so seasonably be exhorted to the work of religious examination and reformation as this, when our church enjoins us to an especial abstraction from worldly and sensual objects of pursuit, in remembrance of that bitter trial and mortification with which our Blessed Saviour ushered in his process in the flesh, to achieve our redemption from the dominion of sin and Satan. He himself, we find, was “made ‘perfect’ for that undertaking, “by suffering.”

N 4 “fering.”

" fearing." Whatever difficulties, therefore, we may chance to meet with from the seductions of a vicious world and the frailty of a corrupted nature, we should readily endure, and earnestly strive to overcome. The effort, we have seen, by no means exceeds our abilities and advantages; the reward of our labour is infinitely superior to its hardships; — its scene is Heaven; its duration eternity; — and the Son of God himself, who purchased it by his own transcendent merits, has ensured it to us upon his own unalterable word!

DISCOURSE
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DISCOURSE XI.

*THE DUTY OF LIVING PEACEABLY
WITH ALL MEN.*

ROM. xii. 18.

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DISCOURSE XI.

ROM. xii. 18.

IF IT BE POSSIBLE, AS MUCH AS LIETH IN
YOU, LIVE PEACEABLY WITH ALL MEN.

THE precept which is here laid down, carries with it an intrinsic proof of its excellence and importance to the welfare of mankind. No argument can be necessary to prove, that the general practice of it would secure us from a variety of evils which the indulgence of ill-will and malice continually produces ; and, as upon adverting to the principles of Christianity, we find that its genuine spirit

spirit is that of peace and good-will ; its claim to make men happy, even in this world, is established upon the best foundation; and its recommendation to unprejudiced reason, preferred upon the most equitable terms. Those, therefore, whose tempers and dispositions are the most unfriendly to a state of mutual harmony and benevolence, are the worst disciples of the gospel ; and have renounced the favor of God, in the same proportion that they deserve the hatred of mankind.

Such considerations as these, tend to shew us, the reasonableness of the precept which is inculcated by the apostle in my text, and therefore may serve as a general answer to those who object certain circumstances, as reasons for interrupting the peace which it enforces upon our practice. It will be the business of the subsequent Discourse, in pointing out the most likely means of “ living peaceably “ with all men,” to evince that there is no lawful exception to the continual exertion

exertion of our endeavours to promote that amiable system of conduct.

The gospel is distinguished by this peculiar excellence, that there is not a requisition contained in it which is not either practicable in itself, or rendered so by concomitant suggestions. In the present instance, we are commanded, “as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men.” But, as this does not entirely depend upon ourselves, inasmuch as our good intentions may be opposed by others, the apostle introduces his precept, with the condition of “if it be possible;” intimating to us, that though we are to do our utmost to obey that rule of conduct, we must not expect that our endeavours will be always successful. And, that nothing might be wanting to our instruction on the subject, he has previously laid down a variety of precepts, the observation of which would lead to the practice of that contained in my text; which precepts are, in fact, the means of obeying

obeying it, and will best explain the requisites to its attainment. The three comprehensive particulars immediately preceding it, may then be profitably considered, in our meditations upon the excellence, nature, and practicability of “living peaceably with all men.” They are these that follow:—“ Be not wise in your own conceits ;—recompense to no man evil for evil ;”—and “ provide things honest in the sight of all men.” Which, being separately discussed, will lead to a few practical reflections on the text, by way of conclusion.

1. The first of these preliminary precepts is, “ Be not wise in your own conceits :”—do not entertain an unjust and vain opinion of your own abilities and virtues, to the disparagement of those of others. Self-sufficiency is a quality of most pernicious nature; it is entirely contradictory to truth and reason, when appropriated to an imperfect, weak, and sinful creature, and as such is most positively

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tively condemned by the precepts and example of our Blessed Lord, who though in his divine nature of essential purity, innocence, and perfection, yet in his process upon earth distinguished himself as the “meek and lowly” Friend and Saviour of mankind ; and this expressly to convince us, “ that pride was not made for “ man,” and is hateful in the sight of God. This quality is, besides, peculiarly unfavourable to the existence and cultivation of a peaceable disposition. Under its influence, a thousand occasions unavoidably occur, wherein we conceive ourselves injured by our fellow-creatures, and entertain in consequence the most bitter resentment against them, which is certainly the very opposite in tendency to the temper of my text ;—and it is farther remarkable, that the wound which is given to pride, is of all others the most galling and intolerable : hence there is no provocation so readily and so easily returned, as that which arises from its infliction.

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proud man is therefore essentially disqualified from obeying the precept of the apostle; unjust to others, and partial to himself, he sees every thing through a distorted medium: while he denies their due to every one around him, he arrogates to himself what charity itself would be forced to refuse him, and therefore must, more or less, be at perpetual war with the rest of mankind. It is, therefore, with striking propriety, that the apostle has charged us “not to be wise in our own ‘conceits.’” Reason and revelation convinced him of the importance of this precept, and pointed out to him how unchristian that disposition was, which renounced the obeying it; how foreign to the dictates of the gospel, and how inconsistent with the hope of sharing in the blessings which it promised to the humble and self-denying disciple!

2. The next precept he has given us, is of equal consequence with the last: “Ren-“der,” says he, “to no man evil for evil.”

If

If the subduing of self-conceit prevents us from resenting imaginary injuries, the observance of this precept will deter us from the avenging of real ones. There is, perhaps, no requisition of the gospel so difficult to the practice of unassisted nature, as the forgiveness of injuries : the very principle of original corruption being pride and self-will, we have in our minds a very quick sense of wrong done to us ; and the first emotion is always followed by a strong inclination to return them ; and when that inclination is complied with, a momentary gratification ensues ;— but is only momentary : the evil we have done becomes a source of commiseration, and conscience reproaches us with being its authors. The avenging of injuries therefore brings with it a concomitant proof of its being wrong and hurtful ; hurtful not only to those who feel its effects, but also to those who have recourse to it as a remedy to their own sufferings ; and the difficulty of restraining it does not arise

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from its being a reasonable object of desire, but because human nature, being far gone from virtue, will not always listen to reason when opposed to degenerate passion. Well therefore has the gospel, which was intended to redeem us from error, well has it commanded us to "love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, and "to pray for them which despitefully use "and persecute us :" I say that it has done well for us, in making this one of the conditions of our being its faithful and favoured converts ; for he who has brought his unruly propensities under such subjection as to be able to forgive an injury, and to do a good office to him who has done him an evil one, has arrived at a most certain method of securing his own private and personal happiness. The plaudit of conscience and the consolations of divine grace will render the endurance of his own wrong a very easy task indeed ; and it is highly probable that he will not have to encounter a repetition of it ; for, bad as some men are,

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there are not many of them so bad as to accumulate injury on a fellow-creature who gives the most signal proofs of his benevolence towards the worst of them; not to say that a kind and bountiful Providence will peculiarly exert itself in behalf of such a being, and requite him ten-fold into his bosom for the good he endeavours to do to all around him. It is almost as needless to observe that a similar temper of mind, becoming generally prevalent, must promote the welfare of mankind at large, as it is to remark, that it is essential to the performance of the precept in my text; for he can never be said "to live peaceably with all men," as much as in him "lies", who is ready to sacrifice public tranquility and happiness to the gratification of a base resentment and savage indignation; and none can be so entirely disposed to it, as the man who has learned to "give place unto wrath," and to leave vengeance to God, who, if "his enemy hunger, is ready to feed him;

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"if he thirst, to give him drink; and to heap no other "coals upon his head" than those which he must feel, upon receiving so gracious and so undeserved a return."

The last prelimentary precept to be considered, requires us to "provide things honest in the sight of all men;" or, in other words, to be diligent and circumspect to do the thing which is right, and approved to every one, who is capable of judging of our actions. To be humble, and to be compassionate and forgiving, are qualities very conducive to living peaceably with all men; but unless they are evidences of a spirit equally Christian in other respects, they will hardly answer the purpose intended, without many painful exceptions. The humility of a vicious man may be construed into meanness; and his forgiveness of injuries, into pusillanimity; and both the one and the other so regarded, will be of little advantage to the cause of peace and good-will. It is therefore

fore necessary, that we make it impossible that our good should be evil spoken of," in order to render it truly beneficial; and that by shewing it proceeds from the genuine, uncorrupted source of a heart thoroughly influenced by gospel principles ; or, agreeably to the apostle's expression, a heart which is careful to " provide things honest in the sight of all men."

Still however, after all, the best of men cannot always ensure the benevolent end which they labour to promote. Our apostle therefore, as we have before observed, qualifies his precept with an "if it be possible, as much as in us lies". And this, we should remark, does not merely forewarn us of the ill success of such endeavours, in some cases, but even implies that that ill success should not discourage their continuance in future. Our blessed Lord, whose perfect life furnishes an example to us, in every variety of moral conduct ; He, I say, not only proves to us

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that virtue is not an uniform security from the worst of treatment, but also assures us that that treatment is no reason for remitting our virtue and our constant exertions for the welfare of our fellow-creatures. Upon one occasion he observed to his disciples, “If the world hate you, ye know “that it hated me before it hated you. “Remember the words that I said unto “you, the servant is not greater than his “Lord; if they have persecuted me, they “will also persecute you; if they have “kept my saying, they will keep yours also:” and upon another, he establishes the rule of social conduct upon the noblest basis: “As ye would that men should do “to you, do ye also to them likewise: for “if ye love them which love you, what “thank have ye? For sinners also love “those that love them: and if ye do “good to them which do good to you, “what thank have ye? for sinners do “even the same. And if ye lend to them “of whom ye hope to receive, what thank

“have

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" have ye ? For sinners also lend to sin-
" ners, to receive as much again. But
" love ye your enemies, and do good, and
" lend, hoping for nothing again : and
" your reward shall be great, and ye shall
" be called the children of the Highest ;
" for he is kind unto the unthankful
" and to the evil : be ye therefore merci-
" ful as your Father in heaven also is mer-
" ciful." So that the meaning of Saint
Paul, the apostle of that same Lord and
Master, in the conditional clause in ques-
tion, cannot be to countenance in any re-
spect a remission of our endeavours to live
peaceably with all men," but to prevent
our being discouraged by the prospect of
their failure through the perverseness of
others. What then becomes of all the lit-
tle bickerings, jealousies, and animosities,
which so often arm us one against the
other, and interrupt that harmony which
we have seen to be our interest as well as
our duty ? Are they not, under any pro-
vocation whatever, unreasonable and un-

O 4 christian ?

christian? Undeniable proofs, I should say, that we have forgotten the law and the promise of God and Christ, and determine to obey that foul guidance through which man originally fell from Paradise, and to abide those fearful consequences from which the Son of God alone has been able to redeem any of our wretched race! — The Saviour who has bidden us to “learn of him, for he was meek and lowly,” has inculcated no such lesson as this. “Love one another as I have loved you,” is the general spirit of his instruction. “By this,” said he, “shall men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”. In his kingdom of glory above, his happy and faithful subjects are distinguished by that amiable characteristic, in its highest degree; and we who in this his probationary kingdom aspire to join those blissful inhabitants of light, must first be qualified for their society, by denying self, and all its pollutions, bitternesses, and prejudices, and cultivating a disposition

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disposition consistent with that “peace on earth and good-will towards men,” which angels from heaven expressly proclaimed on his coming into the world. Let us then, my brethren, who are incited by every thing that is awful, respectable, and lovely, be induced seriously to set ourselves to obey the precept of my text,—“ if it be possible, as much as in us lies — let us live peaceably with all men,” though in the observance of so comprehensive a rule we may meet with neglect, with ingratitude, with injury, with persecution, let us still persevere in our duty: even here we shall not lose our reward; but our great, our everlasting recompense awaits us in heaven; and as surely as infinite power, infinite goodness, and infinite truth are to be depended upon, so surely shall we obtain it, thro’ the mercies and mediation of our blessed Lord.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XII.

CONDESCENSION TO THE INFIRMITIES OF OTHERS, A CHRISTIAN VIRTUE.

1 COR. viii. 11.

DISCOURSES ON
CONSIDERATION OF THE VARIOUS
MATERIALS & CHARACTERS
OF NATURE.

I. CONSIDERATION

DISCOURSE XII.

I COR. viii. 11.

**AND THRO' THY KNOWLEDGE SHALL THE
WEAK BROTHER PERISH, FOR WHOM
CHRIST DIED?**

AMONG the various requisites to complete the character of a good Christian, we find that our apostle, in the chapter of my text, places a due attention to our external deportment with respect to the world, and a decent regard for their opinions and scruples, particularly in religious matters, as very commendable and desirable qualifications to accompany internal purity and holiness. These ornamental virtues, if I may be allowed to call them so, he considers as of consequence not

not only to ourselves, from the lustre which they cast on the more essential virtues of the Christian life, but also to others (more especially to our inferiors in knowledge and abilities) by setting them an example, which is not liable to be perverted or mistaken, through an haughty and unkind neglect on our part, of their feelings and welfare.

Our obligation to practise them, he inculcates, by shewing the evil consequences of a contrary conduct: and it will be of advantage to our present purpose, to consider the occasion which introduced the subject into his epistle, that being naturally introductory to our comprehending the weight he intended to communicate to his precept.

The city of Corinth, altho' called to the blessings of the gospel by the preaching of St. Paul, was yet, at the time of his making this address to his Corinthian converts, for the most part, deeply plunged into idolatry. He had, indeed, planted

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the cross of Christ within its limits ; but the extent of his church was small, in comparison of the number of its Heathen inhabitants. Hence it was that all the profane rites of their religion were continued among them, after their usual corrupt manner. Of these, the epistle before us takes notice of certain feasts which were held in honour of their idols ; at which it is probable, that those Christian converts who maintained any communication with their Heathen fellow-citizens, were invited by the latter, either from a principle of former friendship, or with a view of inciting them over again to the errors they had abandoned ; or, perhaps, of scandalizing their more scrupulous Christian brethren. However this might have been, it appears that some of them actually frequented them ; and went so far, as to eat of the sacrifices offered to the idols. The apostle does not inform us that this arose from any criminal compliance, but rather from a persuasion,

that

that as they were convinced an idol was nothing in the world, the sacrifices were no more than any other food, and might be eaten with equal propriety; but then, the consequence of this was, that those who apprehended that the sacrifice acquired some pollution by the profane use it had been devoted to, and who are here distinguished by the appellation of "weak brethren," were offended and hurt by seeing these practices adopted; or, what was still worse, were induced, at the same time that they supposed the action condemnable, to do it themselves, through the influence of their example, and then, "with conscience of the idol, eating it as a thing offered unto an idol, their conscience being weak, was defiled."

This being the case, the apostle proceeds to argue in the following perspicuous and forcible manner:—"Meat," saith he, "commendeth us not unto God; for neither if we eat, are we the better
" neither

“ neither if we eat not, are we the worse.
“ But take heed, lest by any means this
“ liberty of yours, become a stumbling-
“ block to them that are weak. And
“ through thy knowledge shall the weak
“ brother perish, for whom Christ died?
“ For when ye sin so against the brethren,
“ and wound their weak consciences, ye
“ sin against Christ.” From whence we
may gather, that he whose conduct is not
absolutely reprehensible in itself, but yet,
in relation to others, may be a means of
offending or enslaving their consciences, is
bound to alter it, under pain of commit-
ting a sin himself, as well as of making
them sin also. The precept we may then
collect from the preceding observations, is
briefly this:—That a due attention to our
external deportment with respect to the
world, and a decent regard for their opi-
nions and scruples, are requisite to com-
plete the character of a good Christian.

And this I shall endeavour farther to
enforce, by proving,

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1st, That a contrary conduct betrays, in some degree, an unbecoming spirit of pride, arrogance, and want of charity.

2dly, That it may be productive of bad consequences to others ; and,

3dly, That the relation we stand in to others, as Fellow-Christians no less than as men, makes such a conduct highly reprehensible and sinful, and consequently injurious and dangerous to ourselves.

These points being proved, the result will be clearly in favour of the precept before laid down, without any farther enlargement on the subject.

I. It will be no difficult matter to prove, ‘ that a conduct which implies an indifference about the effect it may have upon the world, betrays, in some degree, an unbecoming spirit of pride, arrogance, and uncharitableness.’ One or two reflections on the subject will be sufficient : — and,

1st, It is very evident, that a man who acts with the best intentions, and from

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the best principles, may be so situated as to have the result of his actions appear, nevertheless, to his disadvantage. It is also possible for a man, who is in the main honest, upright, and good, so to deform and neglect his virtue, by an austere or careless deportment, as to make him suffer in the estimation of the world.— Now, to be wholly indifferent whether these untoward consequences are produced by one's conduct or not, must certainly form such a spirit, which induces us to wrap ourselves up in our fancied superiority, and to look down with a sovereign contempt upon every one beside ourselves, regardless of what they may think of our conduct, and the effect it may produce upon their own.

2dly, It is no less evident, that the force of example on weak and incautious minds, especially if placed in an humble and inferior sphere, is very great, and infinitely greater than precept, with every advantage of intrinsic excellence and addi-

tional authority derived from the person who delivers it. This consideration ought, without doubt, to weigh with every man, and induce him not only to keep his light pure, but to let it also "shine before "men;" if not out of regard for the good opinion of the world (which yet he will find on many occasions his interest to obtain and preserve) yet at least out of tenderness for others, who thro' his morose and perverse indifference, may be hurried on to "make shipwreck of their consciences." And if they have not any weight with a man, it can only be because he wants that charity and benevolence which are the peculiar characteristics of the gospel, whose mild and amiable principles are very happily displayed by St. Paul, in a passage of his epistle to the Romans, on the same subject with the present. "Let "us not judge one another," says he, "any more; but judge this rather, that "no man put a stumbling-block," or any occasion to fall, "in his brother's way.

"If

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“ If thy brother be grieved with thy
“ meat, now walkedst thou not charita-
“ bly: Destroy not him with thy meat
“ for whom Christ died. Let not then
“ your good be evil spoken of: For the
“ kingdom of God is not meat and drink,
“ but righteousness, and peace, and joy,
“ in the Holy Ghost.” And what influ-
ence those principles had upon himself,
we may easily learn from his own decla-
ration on the subject: — “ If meat make
“ my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh
“ while the world standeth, lest I make
“ my brother to offend.”

II. ‘ The bad consequences arising to
‘ others’ from the contemptuous and cri-
minal indifference before mentioned, have
been already hinted at, but they deserve
here a little farther consideration. If the
effect of bad example (whether bad by de-
sign or misapprehension) is injurious to
men of weak minds, in cases where these
bad examples concern only common life,
it is peculiarly fatal when they affect a

man's religious principles and conduct. Weak men are extremely vulnerable in these ; and if by any means they are attacked on that tender quarter, the wound is doubly felt and doubly dangerous. If the force of the example is powerful enough to over-rule entirely a religious scruple (even supposing the example exhibited to be not strictly a bad one, but yet accompanied with an air of licentiousness, hardness, and impiety) it too frequently happens that they are unhinged from all their religious faith in general, and being beaten from their outworks, readily surrender their citadel also. On the other hand, if the influence of the example be sufficient only to ensnare the man without convincing him, the injury is not the less material, and ends in the same manner ; — for having been drawn in to act against his conscience, the pangs and the anguish he at first suffers from the compliance, are greater than can be expressed. As these diminish, the confidence

dence he formerly placed on those who have greater abilities, and are better informed than himself, but who want the virtues we are here recommending, is gradually lost. All their pretensions to religion and virtue, he conceives to be ill-grounded and presumptuous; and at length, from suspecting and despising the professors, he comes to contemn the profession; and is thus brought to the same sad point of irreligion, as if his scruples had been finally overcome, and his conscience entirely laid asleep before he was induced to act.

Which brings me to my
3d Head, In which I proposed to shew
‘that the relation we stand in to others,
as fellow-Christians no less than as men,
renders such a conduct highly reprehensible and sinful, and consequently injurious and dangerous to ourselves;’ partaking,
as we do, of one common nature, and
alike liable all of us to weaknesses and imperfections, we are bound by the strongest

ties of sympathy, nay of self-interest, to support, assist, and yield to each other, where it can be done with a safe conscience: nothing, surely can be more amiable than such a temper, thus sweetened and allayed by kindness and condescension; nothing so truly disgusting as the contrary conduct: for charity has this peculiar recommendation beyond other virtues, that it seems to accord with the very fundamental principles of our nature, to be exercised without effort and difficulty; and when exercised, to give equal pleasure to the benevolent as to the obliged person. When we review the life of our blessed Saviour, independent of all considerations of his divinity, and all the consequent ideas which will arise from them, we feel ourselves most warmly interested for and attached to the amiable person, who most justly is affirmed "to have gone about doing good;" the meek spirit that wept over the impending ruin of ~~the world and~~ Jerusalem,

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Jerusalem, that compassionated the wretchedness of the widow of Nain, bereft of her only son, wants not the most splendid manifestations of divine goodness to engage our affection and regard : in him we have indeed an High Priest, who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and who throughout all the system of his religion, inculcates the duties of charity, mercy, and love ; of that forbearance and condescension which bears with the weakness of a brother, and glorious in its own strength, only as a means of succouring and supporting him as the basis on which that grand superstructure of "righteousness and peace" is founded.

If motives of this kind cannot touch you, surely you are not blind to the incentives of self-interest : if so, suffer them to be briefly suggested to you. Consider for a moment the condition of human nature, weak, dependent, and fragile to that degree, that in any situation we can be placed

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placed in, it is most evidently our interest to look round for and secure support from every side. Friends are as necessary to us as existence ; for surely, to live solitary, disregarded, and neglected, and deservedly too, is not one whit better than not to live at all. Now there is nothing which alienates the affections of mankind so effectually as a conduct distinguished by pride, arrogance, and want of charity. The two first qualifications importing that the possessor places an undue value on himself, and depreciates the worth of other men ; of course they will make it their study to humble this towering spirit, and to convince him that "pride was not made for man :" the second implying, That being too vain to be sensible of his own weakness and imperfections, he has no feelings of compassion for those of others, cares not for their welfare, and would contribute nothing to it,—it is not to be wondered that with principles of this kind, his malevolence and unkindness should re-

beside

turn

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turn into his bosom, and he should meet with the same severity of judgment from the world that he exercises towards it, and, in the hour of need, have none to help him.

If we examine the relation we stand in to each other, as fellow-Christians, we must be sensible how highly condemnable such a conduct must be, and how extremely dangerous to ourselves. “ Thro’ thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died ? ” Shall the Son of God leave the bosom of his Father, become man, and die for the sins of thy weak brother, equally as much as for thine also,—and wilt thou refuse to afford him thy trifling assistance when he stumbles for want of it ? If here the nobler motives of generosity (the spur of virtuous emulation) cannot incite you, recollect that your unfeeling and cruel conduct cannot but be highly displeasing to that good and gracious God who spared not his only Son to save your otherwise lost and ruined soul.

soul. Your Saviour hath expressly declared, that what is done to the least of one of his servants, whether it be good or evil, he considers as done unto himself. Beware therefore lest, when you exalt yourself so begriegiously above your brother, you may not, in your turn, be degraded far below him. The humiliation which you may experience from the hand of your angry God and Saviour, will be infinitely more severe than that which he experiences in the estimation of your uncharitable pride and arrogance. The greater your advantages, the brighter your abilities, and the more abundant your knowledge are, in comparison of his weakness, the greater your crime, and the heavier your punishment will be. Of whom much is given, of him shall much be required: God is no respecter of persons; He judgeth not after man's judgment: he regardeth the humble and lowly, but resisteth the proud doer. Vile and contemptible as we are all in his sight, it is only his unbounded

unbounded mercy which can induce him to regard any of us with the smallest degree of favour ; and certainly those only can expect to find mercy, who, relying wholly on the grace of God, acknowledge their own imperfection and unworthiness to expect and receive reward at his hands : and how little such an acknowledgment is compatible with the spirit that " lifteth " itself above his fellows," let those judge who can discern the difference between the most incongruous things in the world. To these deductions add the declaration of St. Paul, before recited to you, which expressly affirms, that " when ye sin against " the brethren, and wound their weak " consciences, ye sin against Christ :" and remember, that if ye sin against your Benefactor, in whom alone you can found any rational hope of everlasting happiness, what remains for you but " a fearful " looking-for of judgment ? Do not de- " ceive yourselves ; fools make a mock at " sin," but they cannot mock at punish-
ment

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ment when he inflicts it: and among the wretches whom it awaits, none surely are more obnoxious to it than those who live under a dispensation of mercy, and yet refuse to exercise the lowest offices of charity and condescension towards their weak brethren (weak perhaps only in their opinion); and who, like Esau, do not hesitate to sell their birth-right for one morsel of meat; to barter the joys of heaven for the gratifications of little pride and mean self-sufficiency.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XIII.

**HUMILITY URGED, FROM GOD'S CARE
OF HIS CREATURES:**

1 PET. ii. 6, 7.

DISCOURSE
ON THE
MILITARY,
POLITICAL,
AND
SOCIAL
CONSEQUENCES
OF HIS
CIVIL
WARS.

BY THOMAS
HOBSON,

DISCOURSE XIII.

1 Pet. ii. 6, 7.

HUMBLE YOURSELVES UNDER THE MIGHTY
HAND OF GOD; THAT HE MAY EXALT
YOU IN DUE TIME; CASTING ALL
YOUR CARE UPON HIM; FOR HE CARETH
FOR YOU.

IT seems to have been the principal business of the epistle from whence my text is borrowed, to inforce, by a variety of expressions, the duty of patience and resignation in the endurance of persecution and misfortune: and by a careful examination of the context, we shall find that the verses before us have themselves a re-

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ference to the deportment which becomes us under the pressure of calamity. "Let them," says he, in a preceding verse, "let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him, in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator: the elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed; to feed the flock of God which is among you; not as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." This parenthetic exhortation to mutual subjection and lowliness of disposition and deportment, furnishes a favourable opportunity of making a forcible transition to the main subject of patience under suffering,

by shewing how much more they were bound to submit themselves to God; and accordingly he proceeds, in the words of my text “ humble yourselves therefore under “ the mighty hand of God, that he may “ exalt you in due time ; casting all your “ care upon Him; for He careth for you. “ Be sober, be vigilant, because your “ adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, “ walketh about, seeking whom he may “ devour; whom resist stedfast in the “ faith, knowing that the same afflictions “ are accomplished in your brethren that “ are in the world. But the God of all “ grace, who hath called us unto his eter- “ nal glory in Christ Jesus, after that ye “ have suffered awhile, make you perfect, “ establish, strengthen, and settle you. “ To him be glory and dominion for ever “ and ever. Amen.”

The subject of my text, then, is an exhortation to an humble submissive endurance of affliction, upon certain motives which are therein suggested.

Q. 2

1st, “ Hum-

script, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." The power of God is herein assigned as a motive to humility under suffering, for two reasons; which must be considered in their proper order.

There is no consideration which more immediately presents itself to the mind of man under misfortune than that of its cause and origin: no sooner is he made sensible of it, than he resolves in his mind how it has happened that he has been afflicted. If he can place it to his own account and fault, he is called upon by his awakened conscience to accuse himself for his error; to be sorry for it, and to amend it as the only means, either of removing the bad consequences of it at present; or preventing them in future: but if he himself appears to have been innocent of it, he then looks up to God, as the remote or immediate Author of his chastisement; and as every idea of God comprises that of an all-wise and all-gracious

cious Being, he is necessarily led to conclude that it is intended to promote the best and the most beneficial purpose: he is therefore conscious that in all propriety he is bound to submit to his dispensations without murmuring: and when he farther considers that the power of God equals his wisdom and his goodness, the propriety of his submission is enforced by the necessity of it, upon the strongest and the most undeniable grounds. Should therefore the present sense of suffering, so far get the better of his reason and his gratitude, as even to induce him to doubt of the consistency and the utility of the sentence, his own inability to struggle against the decrees of Omnipotence quells his untoward spirit at the instant, and subdues him into silent acquiescence. This then is the first reason why the power of God is assigned as a motive to our humility under sufferings, as it suggests to us the impossibility of resisting it. "Humility evolving Q3" ble

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"ble yourselves under the mighty hand
of God."

2d, This is not the only motive for submission and resignation which is furnished by our conviction of the power of God. If the consideration that the hand of God is mighty to chastise us, should teach us humility under its inflictions, the reflection that it is also mighty to reward our patience and obedience, will be a still more pleasing incentive to such a temper of mind: and this reflection our apostle excites, by recommending to us to "hum-
ble ourselves under the mighty hand of
God, that he may exalt us in due time." When we consider temporal misfortunes as trials of our virtue, and means intended by Providence to illustrate and improve it, in order to our being fitted for the unspeakable happiness of the world to come, nothing can be wanting to convince us that all God's dealings towards us flow from principles of the most universal compassion, benevolence, and pure love: for if every

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every calamity is thus contrived to bring with it an accession to our hopes of enjoyment, what single exception is there to the universality of his plan of mercy in behalf of his human creatures? And then again, when we recollect that our lives, in their longest continuance, are but short; that the most disastrous one that was ever past has had many alleviations and interruptions to its misery, and of course that the sum of our sufferings must be even inadequate, to the limited extent of the present life, how transcendent must we esteem that reward of our enduring them, which is proposed to us, as infinite both in duration and degree! How readily should we humble ourselves when God is thus prepared to exalt us in return! All that is required of us is, to wait his "due time:" the present period is probationary in every respect; chequered therefore with difficulties, discouragements, and disappointments, in order to answer the purposes for which it was intended. The inward

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consolations of virtue supporting itself with consistency under the occurrences of these, are in themselves highly palliative of the worst of them ; but these are infinitely heightened by the assurances of the gospel. — The bright example of our suffering Redeemer, with his gracious promises, shew us indeed we must suffer for a while, but that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. Virtue, therefore, has now its triumphs, as well as its consolations : but for these triumphs it feels that it is indebted to the prevailing merits of its Saviour, and therefore derives from that reflection an additional motive to humility and resiguation under the paternal chastisements of God. Its imperfection it can never lose sight of; every thing adverse, therefore, it acknowledges to be more or less referable to the account of corrections deserved ; and of course to be patiently and cheerfully submitted to, without any pretension to peculiar merit

merit for its obedience ; but when notwithstanding this, it finds that such a reward is laid up for patient continuance in well-doing, the infinite disproportion between what it deserves and what it hopes to receive, cannot but excite its deepest humility and self-abasement, together with the highest sentiments of love, gratitude, and devotion to the Benefactor who so liberally bestoweth his blessings upon us.

II. The next thing to be considered in my text, is that exhortation which is contained in the latter verse of it : “ Cast all your care upon him ; for he careth for you.”

As the preceding verse related to the endurance of actual sufferings, this latter passage refers to the anxiety arising from the apprehensions of such as threaten us in future. This anxiety is very commonly expressed by the word Care, and is as commonly experienced by those who are wedded to this world, and have been accustomed to look no farther than their own

dexterity

dexterity and industry to procure them comfort and happiness, and to relieve them from distress and misery. The advice which our apostle gives is the very reverse of such a procedure: it recommends us to cast all our care upon God, to rest satisfied that he will dispose of every thing in future to our ultimate advantage, and to be persuaded that whatever at present may look dull and gloomy to us, through our imperfect view of things and events, will hereafter be brightened by Him, when in his appointed time he shall discover to us the wonderful purposes of his love towards all his creatures. This persuasion, it must be confessed on all hands, would effectually tend to reconcile us to every event that could possibly happen to us; and no objection can be formed against its prevalence, on the score of its being visionary and delusive; for no one who has formed to himself a right idea of God, agreeably to what his own past experience of his dealings towards him, and the express

press declarations of revelation will suggest; no one, I say, so instructed, can fail to entertain that trust and confidence in him which are implied in the phrase of casting all our care upon him: and the only reason that can be assigned for our mistrust and diffidence of his goodness is, that we have kept ourselves totally ignorant of and estranged from him; for many there are in the world who know so little of the secret history of their own minds, that they have never thought a moment upon the visitations of grace by which God has been struggling with their corrupt natures, in order to accomplish their conversion and regeneration, and finally their happiness: they have not, therefore, comprehended the meaning of the many pangs and sufferings he has made them endure, as sharper remedies to work a cure in their minds, when lenient applications have lost their effect: and with regard to revelation, what little they have known of it, has been at the inter-

interrupted periods of Sunday-attendance upon divine worship; and that, too, frequently discontinued, without a moment of leisure allowed to themselves to reflect upon the general force and tendency of these momentous truths which they are there invited to contemplate and to profit by; and therefore such people, strangers alike to God's private and public calls to righteousness, are very likely, in times of actual and apprehended distress, to accuse Providence of severity and unkindness, and to place no dependence upon his merciful intentions towards them, if, in any respect, removed from immediate observation. Far different from this is the temper and disposition of the Christian who has accustomed himself from time to time to look in upon his own mind, to attend to every motion which arises in it, and to trace it back to its principle and source; for he is conscious that in every instant of his life, however chequered with misfortune, his God is with him!—That he
arranges

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arranges every thing that is to befall him; and that the end of them all will redound to his benefit. Sometimes he recognizes his presence by an inward check and restraint, when he is inclined to do wrong; sometimes by a secret approbation when he has determined upon that which is right; at others, by an ineffable consolation under the manifold distresses which more or less infest human life; and at all times by a peace and tranquility of mind which unaccountably surmount all the storms and perturbations of passion and affliction, and render the worst of conditions easy and tolerable. To a mind conscious of such impressions (and it is our own fault that we are not all conscious of them) it can be no difficult task to "cast all its care upon God;" as it cannot fail of being convinced, upon the best grounds, that "He careth for us."— Most strikingly-beautiful are many of the figurative modes of expression which the sacred writers have adopted, to represent

to

to us the love of God towards men, and to engage us to return a correspondent love to him, and a consequent endeavour and inclination to please and to obey him in all things. The prophets in particular have delighted to enlarge upon the subject, with a tenderness of manner which is irresistible : — “ I will mention,” says Isaiah, “ the loving kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, “ according to all that the Lord hath bestowed upon us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed upon them, according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving kindnesses. “ In all their afflictions he was afflicted, “ and the angel of his presence saved them : in his love and in his pity he redeemed them ; and he bare them, “ and carried them all the days of old.” And our apostle, with less amplification but with equal energy, has given us the same ideas in the words we have been

con-

considering:—" Casting all our care upon
" him ; for he careth for us." His soli-
citude and anxiety are therein described
as extending to all our cares, wants, and
distresses, and relieving them in every
instance of necessity ; and if any thing
can induce us to repose all our trust and
confidence upon our heavenly Father, it
must be these reiterated assurances of his
unbounded goodness and compassion for
us.

We have now, my brethren, considered
my text in all its parts ; and as it has
entirely a practical tendency, it requires
but few words, in addition to what has
been already said, to apply it to ourselves:
yet thus much it may not be inexpedient
to add, by way of summary of the whole.
Every one of us must be sensible that we
are subject, in different degrees, to trouble
and misfortune ; and that these, without
a due regulation of the mind, are very apt
to subdue our patience, and to render us
wicked as well as miserable : none of us
therefore

therefore can be indifferent about the proper mode of bearing them, so as that the hardest lot may be capable of comfort and consolation : now this we are instructed in by the subject of my text. We are therein exhorted to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God; to consider who it is that afflicts us, how vain it is to resist him, and how absurd and ungrateful it would be, were it even in our power, when he has promised so transcendently to reward our patient submission to his dispensations. Thence we are called upon to abandon all mistrust and diffidence of his goodness, all care and anxiety about the events of this life, and to rely wholly upon Him who "careth for us," is interested in our welfare, and will infallibly promote it at the last, if we devote ourselves to Him and to his will, and walk according to his laws. These assurances, consolatory as they are, are given to us all ; the most fortunate of the sons of men would be miserable without them ;

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them; the lowest and the most distressed have equal claim to them with the most exalted and the happiest. Let us all then, whatever our rank, condition, and circumstances may be, concur in striving to obtain their gracious tenor by those habits of pious trust and faith in God, upon which our hopes of realizing them must depend.

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DISCOURSE XIV.

DUTY AND IMPORTANCE OF SEASONABLY USING SPIRITUAL ADVANTAGES.

JOHN xii. 35.

DIALOGUE VII.

DEAL AND DIALECTICS OF SEVEN
LITERATURES
AND LANGUAGE

John Lee 32

R.

DISCOURSE XIV.

ST. JOHN xii. 35.

THEN JESUS SAID UNTO THEM, YET A LITTLE WHILE IS THE LIGHT WITH YOU; WALK WHILE YE HAVE THE LIGHT, LEST DARKNESS COME UPON YOU.

THE evangelist informs us that our Lord, in one of his public conversations with the Jewish people, took occasion to prepare them for the approaching event of his death; from which the most important consequences would accrue to them, and to all mankind. Upon which he farther informs us, that "the people answered, We have heard out of "the law that Christ abideth for ever; "and how sayest thou, the Son of Man

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"must

" must be lifted up? Who is this Son of
" Man?" This latter question, it is clear,
was not the effect of ignorance, but of
perverseness; for he had before declared,
in his own person, — " and I, if I be
lifted up, will draw all men unto me:"
therefore, when they enquired concern-
ing the Son of Man's being lifted up, they
must have known of course that the Son
of Man was our Lord himself. Of this
prevarication, however, he did not con-
descend to take notice; a more essential
point than this he had in view:— " Then
said Jesus unto them, yet a little while
is the Light with you." Your con-
ceptions of the abidance of the Son of
Man are exceedingly erroneous; — but it
is not my present purpose to inform you
why they are about to be contradicted by
my speedy departure; it is sufficient for
you to know, that yet a little while I,
who am the Light of the World, the
Light that lighteth every man that com-
eth into the world, that I am with you,
that

DISCOURSE XIV. 247

that ye still have it in your power to behold my miracles, and to hear my doctrines ; to be convinced by the one, and to be converted by the other ; but bear in mind, that these advantages will remain to you but a little while :—“Walk,” therefore, “while ye have the light :” make the best and the most extensive use of the present gracious opportunity, lest darkness come upon you ; lest the interval of conviction and conversion be forfeited, and you experience an allotment of misery in the sequel, which is most faintly delineated by the discomforts of those who, surrounded by dangers and deprived of the light of day, stumble about in the obscurity of night, without any guide to direct their steps, and preserve them from error.

How abundant in mercy does this reply of our Lord evince him to have been, even to his avowed enemies and persecutors, the Jews ! The bitter event he was foretelling, was to be brought about by

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the very nation he was addressing. Still, however, his heavenly mind was out of the reach of anger and resentment; even then was he endeavouring to snatch them from the ruin to which they were hurrying; of the infinite advantages of his presence and conversation he was yet anxious to convince them; the danger which awaited the forfeiture of those privileges he was equally studious to represent to them; the blessings he preferred were still within their grasp; the miseries he pointed out were still to be avoided, had they been as inclined to accept as he to afford their assistance:—but this, alas! was far from their minds! They rejected their Redeemer, and would not walk in his light; the darkness came upon them; and still do we see them labouring under its influence, not knowing whether they go, or when their misfortunes will end.

An instructive lesson, we must allow, is here suggested to us, by this particular of Jewish history: while the attentive

Christian

DISCOURSE XIV. 249

Christian looks round upon the world, and beholds the descendants of the persecutors of our blessed Lord wandering over its surface,—strangers and sojourners in every corner of it, and destitute of every claim upon its permanent inhabitants, but those which humanity, benevolence, and compassion, may chance to produce in their behalf; while, I say, he looks round and discovers this singular condition of the once favoured People of God; when he reflects too that it constitutes a precise fulfilment of prophetic denunciations, which from time to time, were launched against their rebellion and impiety against Him; can he fail to be seriously interested in the nature and consequences of his own conduct, with reference to God? Can he refrain from applying to his own moral state, that pungent exhortation of our Lord, which has been given us in the text:—“ Yet a little while is the Light “ with you; walk while ye have the “ Light, lest darkness come upon you?”

1. Yet

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1. Yet a little while, my brethren, is the Light, indeed, with us all!—Life we complain is short, transitory, and uncertain; but it is always long enough to furnish us with a day of grace, in the course of its duration. By a variety of persuasive methods our heavenly Father addresses us, to preserve us from sin, and to induce us to follow after righteousness; the gospel of his ever-blessed Son, the whispers of his Holy Spirit, are perpetually suggesting our duty, and urging us to pursue it, in opposition to those fatal habits of delinquency, which our sad propensities, concurring with the seductions of the world and the Devil, are so ready to establish and indulge. Nor is it soon that our perseverance can force him to withdraw from us the opportunity and capacity of growing wise unto salvation; it is only by the slowest and the most imperceptible degrees that he takes them from us, and leaves us to the darkness of our inbred corruptions; and often, too,

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In the progress to this state of abandonment, he interposes some alarming call, to rouse us from our torpor and save us from destruction; a thousand and a thousand times does he enable each of us to know that the light is with us for a little while, and that it becomes us to walk while we have the light, lest darkness come upon us before it actually arrives and overwhelms us. Never has there existed an incorrigible and reprobate sinner, who has had the smallest reason, who has even had the effrontery to accuse the Divine Mercy of neglecting him, while it was within the limit of moral possibility to have prevented his ruin; and never will such an one be consigned to the direful punishment which assuredly awaits him, without having this tormenting consideration added to his misery, that he might have been everlastingly happy, and that he has none but himself to charge as the author of his misfortune.

s. To

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To all of us then, no less than to the Jews, who heard him during his ministry upon earth, does the Redeemer address his exhortations, to " walk while we have the Light ;" to press forward in our Christian progress toward our spiritual perfection, while yet we have the means of attaining it within our reach. Though it is undoubtedly true, that He is the Light by which we are to walk ; it is as true, that we are to be the acting persons in walking by it, with ready wills and earnest endeavours. True religion is a devotion of the mind to God, a diligent exertion of its powers to please and to obey him in all things, and a consequent system of virtuous actions, in evidence of our faith and love to him. He, therefore, that in his practice would think of separating moral rectitude from religious purity, divides things which are essentially united, substitutes the shadow in the place of the reality, and will assuredly inherit a curse,

curse, where he flatters himself he shall obtain a blessing.

3. Nor is he more safe who, while he assents to the necessity of a reformation of conduct, delays to begin it for a distant and more convenient period. Observe, I pray you, that our Lord has told us, that a little while the Light is with us; and that he has bidden us to walk while we have the Light. He has therefore commanded us to avail ourselves of the present moment, and to form no fond expectations of ensuring the next, after trifling with this. It is his command, I say, that we should urge on our journey, without waiting for more light to direct us, or for a continuance of that which actually shines upon our way. It is his command suggested, upon the interesting consideration of the danger we run of being surprized by the night:—"Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you." Not more certainly, in the natural world, does the night succeed.

ceed to the day, than in the moral: the careless and negligent sinner exposes himself to the danger of forfeiting his day of grace for a dreary night of reprobation and impenitence; — and that peril, we should observe, does not merely consist in the shortness and uncertainty of human life, altho' this is a very substantial reason to excite our diligence and activity. Often is the interval of repentance, conversion, and amendment expired, long before the arrival of the hour of death: — often is the spiritual life extinguished, while the natural has scarce attained to half its duration. Hence it is that we see instances of persons who proceed from sin to sin without emotion; and, under a burden of the grossest enormities, go as easily through life, even to its very exit, as if they had the calmness and composure of conscious virtue to sweeten its vicissitudes, and reconcile them to its loss. The truth is, that such persons having long resisted the light of divine grace, have at last been totally abandoned

doned by it, have grown callous to reflection, and are therefore at peace, only because they are past the feeling of danger and distress. In fact, there is no situation of mind so much to be suspected as that of security and self-confidence:—not one of us has reason to indulge them for a moment; and when they have unexpectedly invaded us, it is always necessary to enter into the strictest examination of our moral state, to try the grounds of their pretensions, and where they are not founded upon the solid basis of a conscientious discharge of our duty, to the utmost of our ability, where they are not qualified besides with the meekness and humility of the gospel, to resign them for ever. Too often are they the most melancholy proofs of a state of confirmed reprobation, which has rendered us insensible to our real condition, and least suspicious of danger where it was most to be apprehended. This then is one of the species of darkness which our Lord has cautioned us against

against incurring, in consequence of the neglect of those advantages which a good and gracious God never fails to afford us all: — a darkness worse than Egyptian, which gradually comes upon the mind, absorbs all its faculties, deadens all its shame, overwhelms all its good dispositions, and prepares it for the commission of any enormity which falls in its way. Under its influence, a century of years annexed to our lives, would furnish only a more extensive opportunity of filling up the measure of our iniquities, and riveting our doom to everlasting misery. Few, however, it is to be hoped, have arrived at that maturity of sin; altho' too many of us are extremely deficient, we must flatter ourselves with the persuasion, that the generality are within the reach of conviction, and inclined to be reproved and set right at some time or other. We all of us, at least, trust that the gates of misery are not as yet closed against ourselves. But why, I would ask, is any

time

DISCOURSE XIV. 257

time preferred to the present, for that serious reflection of which we know that we stand in need? — Why do we depend upon a future opportunity, which may never arrive? — Is not the darkness of death coming upon all of us, and the breath that is now in our nostrils as transitory and fugacious as the vapour that passeth by, or the spark that flieth upward? — Does not every day remind us, by a variety of instances, that nothing on this side the grave can be depended upon, but the event that is to carry us beyond it? Strange then that we can trifle with a work, the doing of which is of the utmost consequence to our happiness, not for to-day or to-morrow, but for all eternity! Perhaps at this instant we may each of us be triumphing in the comfortable sensations of health, vigour, and animal strength: — But can health, or vigour, or strength, give us any security against the arrow that flieth by night, or

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the pestilence that walketh at noon-day? Have we not been witnesses of the sudden departure of persons, whose claims to length of days have been full as reasonable as our own? Yet such we have seen drop into their graves, sometimes without a moment's warning to themselves, but never without a striking memento to us who survive them, that “we know not the day nor the hour “when the Son of Man cometh.” How applicable then is the whole of our Lord's exhortation to every one of us, however situated in point of present advantages or future hopes! Let us then be reasonably influenced by its important suggestions; that so whenever it shall please our heavenly Father to call us hence, in the morning, at the noon, or in the evening of our lives, we may be ready to obey his call, with the humble confidence of disciples, who, sensible of the infirmities and uncertainties of their condition, have
been

DISCOURSE XIV. 259

been uniformly guarded against both; who have diligently improved their several advantages, and who depend upon his goodness, first to accept their imperfect endeavours, and then to reward them, for the sake and through the mediation of his ever-blessed Son !

ГЛАВА IV

et hoc dicens habens vocationem misericordie vestre habere vestrum vitium agnoscere et coram eis docere hunc est enim regnum dei. Et hoc agnoscatur in eo quod resumunt ipsorum omnes fratres. Quod resumunt fratres omnes fratres. Unde etiam dicitur in libro prophetarum: Resumit fratres omnes fratres. Unde etiam dicitur in libro prophetarum: Resumit fratres omnes fratres.

W. KUODAIC

DISCOURSE XV.

***ON CHRIST'S NOT SENDING PEACE,
BUT A SWORD.***

MATT. X. 34.

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DISCOURSE XX

ON CHRIST'S NOT SENDING ANY
BUT A WORD.

MATTHEW 10:34.

DISCOURSE XV.

St. MATT. x. 34.

**THINK NOT THAT I AM COME TO SEND
PEACE ON EARTH: I CAME NOT TO SEND
PEACE, BUT A SWORD.**

IT may, perhaps, be with some degree of surprise that you will learn, that these words were spoken by the Prince of Peace himself, whose coming was announced to the astonished shepherds of Bethlehem, as tidings of great joy, fraught with peace on earth, and good-will towards men. And an apparent difficulty may arise, in reconciling these opposite descriptions of the same event, as well as an objection be started from the tenor of

that contained in my text, against the argument which is often urged in favour of the gospel, upon the grounds of its being the work of an all-gracious and beneficent God.

But a little attention to the subject will fully satisfy every doubt, and convince us that its import does not at all interfere with that position.

We should call to mind, on every such occasion as the present, that the dealings of Providence with man are always consistent with his moral liberty; and that of course there exists a possibility, that the perverse exertion of this privilege may produce consequences directly opposite to those which should have flowed from a concurrence with the divine intention. Keeping this observation in view, we may very easily, after examining the context, understand in what sense our Lord may have declared, that he was not "come "to send peace, but a sword" into the world.

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He had just before told his disciples, that he was about to "send them forth as sheep among wolves." And this expression was introductory to the most explicit premonitions of the persecution and cruel treatment which their labours in propagating the gospel would receive from their Pagan and Jewish enemies. Now in continuation to such a discourse as this, he proceeds to tell them why it was necessary for them to be guarded against these events, by adding in the words of my text, and of the following verses:—" Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance with his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. He that

"that findeth his life shall lose it; and he
"that loseth his life for my sake, shall
"find it." As if he had said,—These
different precautions I have given you,
because that, though the spirit of the
gospel, of which I appoint you to be the
ministers and preachers, is that of the
most universal charity and benevolence,
and is perfectly well calculated to pro-
mote the most perfect happiness, and the
best interests of its professors, it will not
secure them from the malice and opposi-
tion of the wicked. Nay it will, for a
time, through their means, be an occasion
of dissentions and divisions; which with-
out it might not have happened. Per-
sons who are most nearly connected by
the relations and ties of consanguinity,
will yet be variously affected by its exhort-
ations; the father and the son, the mo-
ther and the daughter, alike addressed by
its preachers, will one embrace, and the
other reject, their call to repentance and
conversion; and hence will be divided
against each other, and endure and inflict

a se-

a severity of persecution, which would only be expected among the bitterest of enemies. Such indeed will be some of the first effects of my coming, altho' strikingly different from the ends proposed in it, which will however be finally accomplished in the sequel of things, and fully vindicate the goodness and benevolence of my intentions. Be not then dismayed at the gloomy prospect which I have laid before you! Be assured, that he that endureth unto the end shall be saved, and abundantly rewarded for his perseverance; but in the mean while remember that every thing is to be sacrificed for my sake, and that every thing you can sacrifice is but a paltry compensation for the blessings which you will ultimately derive from my interposition. If then the authority of a parent, or the influence of a darling child, shall over-rule my commands, you are not worthy of me. I have told you, that you must take up the cross, as I shall bear it, without its colds
heaviest

heaviest aggravations ; that you must be ready to lay down your life for my sake, as I shall give mine a ransom for you and for many ; and if your faith is not equal to all these trials, you have no pretensions to the honour and privileges of my disciples, and will infallibly forfeit them.

This appears to have been the general tenor of our Lord's discourse, which, thus explained, is not at all inconsistent with the other declarations of him and his disciples, concerning the peaceable spirit of his doctrines ; since it is a point most clearly evident, that upon the supposition of man's having the free exercise of his will, the best institution may be perverted by his abuse of his intentions, without being in the least accountable for any bad consequences which may result from such abuse. If it be objected, that then the gospel is insufficient to the happiness of man, because that he may defeat its benevolent purpose, we may answer, that as long as man is what he is, an account-

able agent, it is impossible that any system can promote his happiness, independently of his own consent, than no system can more completely provide for it than such an one as furnishes him with the means of everlasting salvation upon the sole condition of his accepting and concurring with them ; and that nothing can be so unreasonable as to complain that it does not bestow it upon us, in cases wherein we withhold it from ourselves.

When therefore we see that those sad consequences have actually followed the propagation of the gospel, agreeably to the predictions of our Lord in my text, we are not to pretend to lay the blame of them upon the nature of his doctrines, but to take upon it ourselves, and to acknowledge with heartfelt confusion and humility, that nothing can exceed the sum of human demerit but that of divine mercy, the infinite degree of which is most signally proved in the present instance ;

stance; wherein we see the ever-blessed Son of God still actively employed in completing the noble purposes of his mission, at the very time when his omniscient mind foresaw all the opposition it would meet with from the very creatures he wished to benefit, nay even forewarned his disciples of it that they might be encouraged to bear up against difficulties, by being prepared to meet them as matters of course. Circumstances which to a principle of love and compassion less divine and perfect than His, would have been more than sufficient to have blasted all its fruits, to have checked all its ardour, and for ever to have deprived us of the glorious advantages which still result to us from it.

Thus then, we have taken a view of our Lord's meaning in my text, and shewn it to be perfectly consonant with the general character of his doctrines and precepts; describing not the direct end of his mission, but those immediate effects which would

would flow from it as it clashed with human error and perverseness. And if the mode of his expression may seem at first to convey the idea of purpose and design, in himself, we shall do well to revert with attention to the common language of prophecy, wherein we shall find that that effect is frequently said to be appointed, which is only predicted to happen; nothing being more common in the sacred writings, when mention is made of a transaction before alluded to by prophecy, than to say, that all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: an expression which can only import that so was fulfilled his prediction: just in the same manner as our Lord, in my text, affirms that he was come, not to send peace, but a sword: when his meaning clearly is, that the immediate consequence of his coming, would be division and persecution, instead of general peace and good-will.

Christianity, indeed, in its first propagation was a sword among its followers;

and

and since its establishment there have been many of its professed disciples who have even made it a pretence to persecute and oppress their fellow-creatures ; but we may challenge its worst enemy to shew how many of its doctrines authorized such a conduct in the smallest degree, or to deny that those of its members who were truly chargeable with the blame of it, had entirely departed from the spirit of its dictates when they perverted it into an occasion or an excuse for their own cruelty and intolerance.

Hitherto the subject has been more to us a matter of speculation than of practical information : let us see whether it may not be made to allude in some secondary sense to Christians who have no religious persecution to encounter, and whose greatest enemies are indeed those of their household—the corrupt inclinations and passions, I mean, which predominate in the mind, and wage domestic war in its

secret

secret recesses. " Think not," says our Lord, " that I am come to send peace on earth : I came not to send peace, but a sword." Let us each suppose that these words are addressed to us in some such sense as the following : — ' Think not that you belong to a religion which is reconcileable with every preconceived opinion, and with every previously established practice. No — the principles and conduct which it inculcates, are precisely and accurately established ; and with no others can it be conciliated. All those corrupt inclinations, and those inveterate habits of sin which the generality of men in some way or other are apt to indulge ; all these, I say, can never be accommodated to its discipline : they must ever be in hostility with it, and render its first introduction a source of intestine commotion and trial, until it has gained the entire possession of the thoughts, the will, and the affections, or till it wholly evacuates the field, and leaves the man to their baleful influence.'

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Just then, as in the natural world, our blessed Lord's kingdom could not be established in that spirit of love, peace, and charity, which properly belonged to it, until it had stood the brunt of the persecuting spirit of the Gentiles and Jews, and during that period involved its professors in trouble and difficulty, so that peace and joy in believing, which constitute the perfection of Christianity in the human mind, cannot be attained before the ferment of rival passions and inclinations, excited by its contrariety to its own principles, has gradually subsided and been entirely subdued by its influence. And here let us take heed how we interrupt that state of self-approbation and security into which so many Christian minds are lulled, as a constant proof of their having submitted to that guidance which could alone justify it in any degree: at all events, such a state is strongly to be suspected, and proceeds too often—not from the universal influence of gospel-righteousness, but because

more useful inserted words that

that it has gained no footing in the mind ; that all the unregenerate inclinations of our fallen nature predominate there, having their full swing, and not any opponent to struggle with. Accordingly we find that there are none so apt to be pleased with, and confident in, their spiritual condition as careless and habitual sinners :— the very persons who should have the least reason to be so. Their consciences may indeed be at peace, but it is because that they have lost the practice of appealing to its tribunal, that its suggestions have been silenced by the solicitations of passion and sensuality ; and that the grace of God, which could alone give energy and authority to its admonitions, has been despised and neglected, and is now totally withdrawn. How dissimilar is their temper from that which Saint Paul recommends, when he bids us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling ! How inconsistent too with the experience that every sober and thinking Christian

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must daily obtain of his frailties and imperfections, and of the little reason he himself would have to sit down satisfied with his past improvements, and with the consequences of them in future, if solely dependent upon their worth. Easily then may we infer the degree of presumption of which those are guilty, who in the midst of a thoughtless and wicked life, feel no compunctions and relentings of conscience, and press on in the same dangerous course, with unruffled tranquility and a steady perseverance of mind.

The truth is, it is always necessary for the Christian to be in arms against the lurking corruptions of his nature, which, as long as they remain unsubdued in his constitution, are as virulent persecutors of his religion as any of those were that opposed the endeavours of our Lord's disciples to propagate Christianity through the world. To these foes our Lord is not come to send peace—but a sword, and that

that sword we must wield, if we would be really his disciples. It is easily allowed that this warfare will often be as galling and as ungrateful to human nature as the divisions of father and son, of mother and daughter, which he forewarned them to expect ; but we must remember that He has said that “ he that loveth father or mother, or son or daughter, more than him, is not worthy of him ; ” and that if a right hand or a right eye offends, we must cut it off and cast it from us ;— so that it is in vain to plead the difficulty and the hardship of the work, as an excuse for the non-performance of it. Tribulation we must expect to have. Our religion is that of the cross, which we must bear thro’ life, under various circumstances ; but never free from the condition of a perpetual struggle between our spiritual and our animal nature ; in which one or the other must finally have the mastery. Revelation clearly exhibits to

us to fight of our dangers, our difficulties, our hope, and our reward : it reminds us that we have enemies within and without us, who are perpetually upon the watch to take us by surprize ; and that we are by nature weak, and extremely prone to yield to their attacks. But at the same time we are assured that the sincere Christian, who makes the best use of his own abilities, and humbly and devoutly applies to God for assistance, will never want the aid of his holy spirit to strengthen him for the combat, and render him more than conqueror : — and as the last compleative inducement to us to exert our utmost endeavours, we are there promised, as the crown of our victory, a blessed immortality in heaven, under the auspices of Jesus Christ our Lord ; who is as well the Author of our salvation as our security for its accomplishment, in all the glorious particulars of its beatitude. In him, then, let us repose all our trust and confidence ; let us enter the lists like

men

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men who have put on “the whole armour of God,” and who fear nothing under his protection:— and when at last our warfare shall be accomplished, may we be found worthy to enter into the joy of our Lord, through his mercies and mediation!

T 4 DISCOURSE

DIALOGUS XI.

me electus et non possum ad eum
quidam sed eis hunc est deo nomen
filius et meus — sed — nisi quis
nam scilicet pater regnatur
nam — Beatus meus et misericordia
mea — et misericordia regna mea
est — hunc enim est deponit quod ego lo-

quidem non possum

DISCOURSE XVI.

*ETERNAL LIFE GIVEN US THROUGH
CHRIST.*

1 JOHN V. 11, 12.

DISCOURSE XVI.

THE END OF THE GENEALOGY
CHRIST.

John v. 11. 12.

but our God is not mocked and he is
true and never

will disappoint all who call upon him

DISCOURSE XVI.

John v. 11, 12. (united by)

THIS IS THE RECORD; THAT GOD HATH
GIVEN US ETERNAL LIFE, AND THIS
LIFE IS IN HIS SON: HE THAT HATH
THE SON HATH LIFE; AND HE THAT
HATH NOT THE SON, HATH NOT LIFE.

John v. 11, 12. (united by)

ARecord this, my brethren, of the
utmost consequence to us all! It is
the record which contains our title to
everlasting happiness, our redemption from
everlasting misery; it is in effect, the es-
sence of all divine revelation, from Adam
to Christ; and if it were not true, as we
know upon the best authority that it is,

it

it had been better for us, that we had never been born.

Since then its tenor is so important, it must be highly useful to every one of us to afford it our particular attention; and to such a design it may be advantageous,

1st, To advert to the circumstance of God having given us eternal life, and this through his Son.

2d, To consider the nature of the eternal life so given; and,

3d, Practically to enforce the assertion, that "he that hath the Son, hath life; " "and he that hath not the Son, hath not life."

1st, Then to advert to the circumstance that God hath given us eternal life, and that through his Son.

Under this head, two particulars occur, which are especially worthy of remark,

1st, That God hath given us eternal life.

2d, That this life is in his Son.

1st, No

1st, No fact can be so easily proved as that every moral and spiritual blessing we enjoy is the pure and unmerited gift of God : for who is there of the sons of men who is not self-convicted of the inherent unworthiness of his nature, which precludes every possibility of his being virtuous and happy through his own means ? who is there, I say, but has in himself a practical proof that man has fallen from perfection, is far gone in sin, and deserves from the hand of God nothing but the extremity of wrath and punishment ? When, therefore, we are at a loss to reconcile to ourselves how it is that the consequences of Adam's transgression are imputed to us, we have only to look in upon our own minds, and we shall find that they are therefore imputed, because that the corrupt will to disobey the commandments of God has descended into each of our individual constitutions. Like him, then, we stand by nature in a state of condemnation, liable to be condemned,

by

by having dispositions to evil; and actually condemned by giving way to those dispositions, and bringing them into action. It is impossible then, that we can of ourselves pretend to any thing like the reward of perfect obedience and sinless performance; — and, whatever claim we can at present make to such reward, what ever hope we can entertain of possessing it, must be through the merits of another superior Being, and through the abundant mercy of God in accepting them on our account, and giving us the benefit of such a substitution. Eternal life, therefore, which only comprehends in its idea every thing that is transcendently great and satisfactory, in recompence of the most exalted virtue, if in any respect attainable, can only be so by the gift of God. That he has actually given it, and upon what special conditions, will hereafter appear in the sequel of this Discourse.

2d, The

2d, The matter of fact is asserted in the second division of the head we are considering; namely, that "the life he has given us is in his Son :" this Son, promised from the earliest period of the fall, as "the seed of the woman who was to bruise the Serpent's head," prefigured and predicted in various manners and at different times, before and under the Mosaic covenant, for a long series of years,—we know has already appeared in the world, at the time fore-appointed of God, and answering in every respect the description where He had given of him, by the law and the prophets, to awaken the attention of mankind, and to enable them to recognize the truth of his declarations concerning himself, when he has asserted that he was come into the world to save his people from their sins, from their guilt, and from their punishment. The purpose of his mission is therefore highly beneficial to the race of man; and in what manner,

and

and in what degree, will in some measure be explained under our

2d Head, Wherein we are now to consider the nature of the eternal life which is given us by God, through his Son.

This subject will be best introduced by adverting to the sentence which was denounced by God against Adam, and afterwards executed upon him, when he had incurred the guilt against which he was cautioned : “ In the day that thou eatest (of the apple) thou shalt surely die.” This sentence, we should observe, referred to a being who in his person united two different and opposite natures; the one corporeal, the other spiritual. To each of these it appears to have had a respective relation, and announced a death, which was likewise twofold. By it, his body became corrupted, subject to infirmity, to disease, to decay, and to death, and at last actually died; while his soul, which was before alive to the impressions of its divine

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divine Parent, which moved in unison with his will, and was superior to the influence of sensual delights, died at once to those impressions : was filled with desires opposed to his will, and became enslaved to the pleasures and pursuits of sensuality. As by the natural death he was reduced to a mere mass of inanimate matter, so by the spiritual, he degenerated to the state of the first inhabitant of this lower world of animals, bereft of the life of grace, shorn of his original brightness, and deprived of that image of God in which he had been created, superior to the good and evil of his present condition, an inhabitant of Paradise, and a candidate for the mansions of eternity in Heaven. These baleful effects of his misfortune, will best explain to us the extent of the advantages we have gained by Christ, the second parent and representative of our nature, who has so benevolently and effectually undertaken to compensate for the injury it sustained from the first. The apostle St. Paul has

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justified

justified this comparative view of the subject, by telling us himself, that “as in “Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all “be made alive.” And St. John, in the text before us, has asserted, in a positive form of expression, the same important fact:—“This,” says he, “is the record; “that God hath given us eternal life; and “this life is in his Son.” What we lost by Adam, we have gained by the incarnate Son of God, who therefore assumed our nature, that he might sanctify it once more, and redeem it from its spiritual bondage. The eternal life then, which God has given us by his Son, is twofold: as it refers to our bodies, he has by his own resurrection, assured us of their being raised again to another state of existence, glorified and incorruptible, and thereby rendered capable of living for ever. As it refers to our souls, he has by his own stupendous union of the divine with the human nature, rekindled its spiritual life, given it a new birth through the influence
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of the Holy Spirit, and restored us to a capacity of being again morally united with God, and dwelling with Him in the uninterrupted enjoyment of a heaven of perfect holiness and everlasting happiness. With respect to the privileges which have been bestowed on our corporeal nature, they appear to be especially connected with our condition in another world; but those which belong to our spiritual nature, in an inferior though real degree, are attainable in our present state on this side the grave. The progressive advancements of this species of life are indeed highly mysterious, and imperceptible to our outward senses: but He, who being sincerely inclined to do the will of his heavenly Father, listens to his external revelations in the gospel of his Son, and to his internal suggestions, imparted to himself through the medium of conscience; he, I say, upon comparing from time to time the effect of his good resolutions, and the delight he takes in bring-

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ing them into virtuous action, will find them always encreasing upon him, and rendering the performance of his duty proportionably easier, less deficient, and more consistent : he will feel and he will rejoice in the perception, that “ here he has no continuing city, but is seeking one to come.” His best affections will be fixed on that pursuit ; and every power of his mind be continually exerted to farther its success, and to avail himself of those means of salvation, which its Bestower has proposed as essential to its final and full assurance ; and at length, by every inward consolation and “ peace in believing,” the “ spirit will bear witness with his spirit, that he is the child of God ; and if a child, then an heir ; an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ.”—And this brings me to my

Third Head, wherein I proposed practically to enforce the apostle’s assertion, that “ he that hath the Son hath life ; and he that hath not the Son, hath not life.”

"life." This assertion may reasonably be interpreted in these words:—' He that accepts of the mediation of Christ, and receives him as his Saviour, will assuredly obtain all the spiritual blessings which he has conferred upon our race; but he that does not accept him, cannot expect to obtain the smallest portion of their beatitude.' Nothing can be more reasonable than that such should be the conditions of his gracious offers; for as we are moral and accountable agents, it is undoubtedly proper, it is absolutely necessary, that we should concur, as far as in us lies, in that which is intended to promote our everlasting advantage; that if we cannot save ourselves, we should be willing and disposed to accept of the salvation of Christ. The point then is to ascertain what that acceptance intends, in its true and genuine signification; and this is the more important, from the aptitude we all have to abridge our duty as much as possible, and curtail it of every

thing that is difficult, trying, and irksome to human infirmity and corruption. Thus in the present instance, the acceptance of our Lord, as the true and only Saviour of men, does not merely consist in crediting the history given of him in the gospels, in applauding his example, and adopting such of his precepts into our practice as may be easiest and most convenient; but it is an implicit faith and confidence in him, and him alone, with a steady reliance upon his promises, and a rigid adherence to all his commands; and these moral principles must be grounded upon a thorough conviction of human weakness and misery, upon a full detection of our own demerits, a strong persuasion of their guilt and danger, a hearty repentance of having incurred them, and an earnest desire of being relieved from our burden by the goodness and power of God. For then they will induce us to apply the moral remedies of the gospel as they were intended, — not as matter of speculative

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enquiry and intellectual acquisition, but as effectual means of healing the spiritual diseases, under which we are conscious that we labour: and this application when honestly and directly made, will convince by its effect, of the true intention and real importance of our Saviour's mission to every one of us. We shall find that Christianity is a vital principle, as essential to our spiritual welfare as food to the support of our natural lives. Hence we shall be persuaded that it is the one thing needful—the chief and the most urgent business of our present existence; and we shall learn justly to estimate the infinite disproportion between the concerns of this world and the next, and to regulate our conduct by the result of the calculation: and wonderful indeed will be its influence upon the general tenor of our tempers and dispositions. When the various acquisitions and pursuits of this world are let down to the just standard of their value, they will be

hardly found sufficient to engross our affections from God and religion, or to interrupt our benevolence towards any of his creatures, by the envy we should otherwise feel against such as are better provided than we are, or by the contempt we are too apt to entertain for those whose prospects and possessions are inferior to our own. When the urgency of our wants and the greatness of our infirmities have been duly impressed upon our minds, it is hardly possible that pride and self-sufficiency should be able to invade them: on the contrary, even when the exertion of our best abilities has been blest by Heaven with the highest moral advancement, our habits of humility will increase in proportion to our progress; and were it possible that we should reach the summit of perfection, we should still remember how many reasons must induce the disciples of a "meek and lowly Saviour, in every state, to be meek and lowly themselves. These are consequences of the utmost

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most importance to the truth of our Christian profession; in fact, they amount to the very characteristics, by which our Lord has described his real and his favoured disciples; as persons who are crucified to the world, and have set their affections on things above; who love one another as He loved them; and who only expect to be exalted by Him, as they have abased themselves. Those characteristics then are naturally superinduced upon our acceptance of his gracious interposition; and since the apostle has asserted that "He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son, hath not life;" and the acceptance insisted upon is implied in the expression of having the Son, they become the most incontestable proofs that such acceptance is essentially necessary to our obtaining those assistances of the holy Spirit, by which the spiritual life, in every well-disposed Christian is begun, nourished, and matured, and upon which depend our hopes of obtaining the everlasting

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Lasting life, hereafter to be enjoyed in his kingdom of heaven ; — by which, as St. Paul expresses it, we are “ chosen by God “ unto salvation,” and will assuredly be saved.

Let us, my brethren, be seasonably influenced by these momentous truths ! — their practical inference is briefly this : — That if we wish to be happy both here and hereafter, we must be virtuous, we must be religious ; and that we can neither be the one nor the other by any other means than becoming disciples of Christ in spirit and in truth : by knowing and applying to ourselves those precepts and doctrines which he has given us in the gospel, to amend our lives, and fit us for happiness. No exception can be admitted in favour of the sins which fashion, or habit, or humour, may have engrafted on our conduct. We must either renounce all its privileges, or practise to the utmost of our ability every one of its precepts. And if virtue is more amiable than vice, if happiness is more desirable than misery,

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if the approbation of conscience is preferable to its reproaches, if Heaven is a better inheritance than Hell, and the favour and presence of God more enviable than the friendship and society of Satan, we must be gainers by submitting to its conditions; we must be sufferers by rejecting them.

DISCOURSE

Geography

entirely consisting of dense, greenish, granular
pebbles, in a coarse, irregular, angular mass; the
matrix of which is a fine sand, containing some
fine, rounded, white, angular pebbles, and
occasionally small, thin, dark, siliceous, or
calcareous, fragments.

DISCOURSE XVII.

***ADHERENCE TO ERROR FROM
FALSE SHAME.***

MATT. XXI. 25, 26.

ИМЯ НАДОБНОЕ
МАСТЕРСКАЯ ОФИЦИЕЛЛОВ
БУДУЩЕГО

DISCOURSE XVII.

ST. MATT. XXI. 25, 26.

AND THEY REASONED WITHIN THEMSELVES,
SAYING, IF WE SHALL SAY FROM HEA-
VEN, HE WILL SAY UNTO US, WHY DID
YE NOT THEN BELIEVE HIM? BUT IF WE
SHALL SAY, OF MEN, WE FEAR THE PEO-
PLE; FOR ALL HOLD JOHN AS A PROPHET.

THIS sophisticated reasoning is mentioned by St. Matthew to have been used by the priests and elders of the Jewish people, to justify to themselves their returning no answer to a question of our Lord, which led to his replying to one which they had previously put to him.—

His

His account of the affair is given us in the following words:

" And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority dost thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which, if ye tell me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things; The baptism of John, whence was it?—from Heaven? or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say from Heaven, he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? but if we shall say of men, we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things."

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It is to be observed, that this question of our Lord was not a mere evasion, which he employed to avoid giving an answer to them : it was a question in point, which, being answered, led immediately to the subject of their own enquiries ; for John declared concerning himself, that he was only “ the voice of one crying in the “ wilderness, make strait the way of the “ Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.” He professed, that he “ baptized indeed with “ water ; but that there stood one among “ his nation whom they knew not ;” and that “ He it was who, coming after him, “ was preferred before him ; whose shoes “ latchet he was not worthy to unloose ; “ and that He should baptize them with “ the Holy Ghost and with fire.” And, “ the next day, seeing Jesus coming unto “ him, he said to them who stood by, “ Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh “ away the sin of the world. This is he “ of whom I said, after me cometh a man “ which is preferred before me ; for he

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" was before me, and I knew him not ;
" but that he should be made manifest to
" Israel, therefore am I come, baptizing
" with water. The same is he which
" baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." So
that upon the whole it is clearly evident,
that to explain from whence the baptism
of John was derived, was, in fact, to de-
clare by what authority our Lord did those
things which had excited their curiosity.
If it was from Heaven, then the authority
upon which our Lord acted, was from
Heaven also ; if it was of men, then did
our Lord derive his commission too from
men.

Such a question, then, which he, in
the plenitude of his divine wisdom pro-
posed to them, was admirably designed to
make them convict themselves, if they
were inclined to speak with candour ; and
if they were not, by remaining unanswered,
it served to hold them out in their
true colours of prejudice, dissimulation,
and obstinacy ; and to shew the fatal con-
sequences

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sequences of being led away by them from the paths of truth and rectitude.

In examining into the nature of the reasoning, which I have quoted to you in my text, you may be perhaps surprized to find that there was not the least reference to the matter of fact ; — whether the baptism of John was from heaven, or of men? All which they seemed to be concerned about, was — what would be the consequence of their affirming this or that alternative ; for as to their real opinion on the subject, it does not admit of a doubt but that they thought in their own minds that He was a great and a true Prophet. Had they been convinced that John had no heavenly commission, we should not have learnt that they observed at all “ if they should say from heaven, “ He would say unto them, why did ye “ not then believe him ? ” But under a persuasion of the falsehood and knavery of his pretensions, their only apprehensions would have been, that they should

suffer from the violence of the people, by contradicting their sentiments.

Instead of that, their first apprehension was, that he would embarrass them with a—"why did ye not believe him?" as soon as they confessed, what they strongly believed, that his baptism was performed under the auspices of heaven. This therefore they were determined not to allow. Poor deluded mortals! to be afraid to be convinced of an error, while they increased the shame of it by obstinately adhering to it! To affect to be in pursuit of truth, while they industriously shut their eyes against it, and blocked up all the avenues by which it could reach them!

For, if we are curious to enquire what they could have said, had our Lord replied to their answer (supposing it to have been that John's baptism was from heaven) in the words which they apprehended, we shall find that all the true reason they could have assigned for not believing

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on him, was because they did not chuse it. For every thing in the nature of the case called on them to believe a prophet who came from God. It was an instance of intrinsic rectitude to follow him, and to obey his precepts from the moment that his pretensions were authenticated; it was therefore absolutely wrong not to obey them, as soon as such a conviction was obtained: and they certainly did incur that wrong, by rejecting that divine Personage of whom he was the declared forerunner and herald. And the more so — because that the whole process of that divine personage upon earth, by testifying in the most flagrant manner the truth of his commission, strongly corroborated the evidence of the other's, which was to prepare men first; and which had accordingly done so—even to the pointing him out to be the very individual who was to undertake the benevolent office of a Saviour and Redeemer to mankind.

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It was therefore a gross error, and a wilful one too, which induced the priests and elders to object to confessing that the baptism of John was from heaven: and the motive of their refusal to make such a declaration, shews that they were determined to adhere to it; since it was neither more nor less than their own consciousness of being in an error, and their determined resolution not to be set right.

But with such an uncandid and knavish disposition, it will be asked,—why did they not at once say, that the baptism of John was of men? They themselves furnish a reason for their caution; and such a reason as perfectly well suited with their narrow and self-interested principles, “because they feared the people;” “for all held John as a prophet.” There was no argument like the following made use of on the occasion: ‘John was an impostor, and therefore we must declare his baptism to be of men; although perhaps

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' perhaps the people who have been deluded by his pretences to sanctity, may be violent upon our contradicting a favourite error of theirs.' There would have been something manly in such a remark, though it had been even grounded on false principles; but that which they actually made, was as widely different as possible: they only wished to declare that he was a false prophet, because that they feared to be brought to a concession which might shew the guilt of their conduct. But as their desire was of so mean a nature, it was not possible that it should have been accompanied with a spirit capable of stemming the torrent of popular fury, excited by the conviction of being unjustly opposed. Upon such most laudable motives, these wise doctors of the law, who notwithstanding all their sanctity, wanted the candour of the profane multitude to acknowledge the truth of Saint John's and our Lord's missions, determined for once to affect an ignorance

rance which was not real ; and accordingly returned no other answser to our Lord's question, than — that they could not tell. This was a demonstrative proof that they neither deserved to receive, nor were capable of being influenced by a direct answer to be given to their question ; and therefore He, with becoming dignity and propriety, replied to it, in those words, which I have before cited to you : “neither tell I you by what authority I “do these things.”

Such appears to have been the nature of the procedure of the Jewish priests and elders on the occasion of their applying to our Lord to know by what authority he acted as a public teacher and worker of miracles. Upon carefully analyzing it, we find that it was founded upon two of the most reprehensible principles.

1st, Upon false shame, and objection to be detected in an error ; and,

2d, Upon an ignoble deference to the
opinion

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opinion of others, and a consequent apprehension of their displeasure at its being opposed.

It was with the intention of shewing you the bad tendency of these principles, that I have hitherto been enlarging on the instance given of their prevalence, in the case before us.

1st, Then, to say a few words concerning the false shame of being detected in an error.

It is evident that nothing can be more inimical to our acting up to the dictates of truth and moral rectitude, than an aversion from being convicted when in the wrong. To err and to mistake, are naturally incident to a state of imperfection and degeneracy like our own. We must all therefore expect to be liable to both, on some — nay on many occasions of our life. To correct this tendency to error, and to prevent it from being matured into a habit of doing wrong, seem to be the principal business of our

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our present life and probation ; and how this is to be done, but by our knowing those instances wherein we have deviated from right, it is difficult to ascertain. Of course, to throw obstacles in the way of our knowing them, is to propagate and increase them, and to render ourselves criminal as far as possible : and this is precisely the spirit of that false shame we are now considering ; for the man who does not chuse to receive the admonitions of another, lest they should attack and lay open some error which requires to be corrected in himself, surely declares that he is resolved not to amend his ways, and that he is attached to his errors, as such, and will adhere to them at any risk ; and therefore it is clear that we must be answerable for all the ill consequences to which his perverseness may lead. Considering the subject in this general view, I make no doubt but we are all unanimous in thinking such a conduct inexcuseable ; but were we to proceed to apply

apply our observations to particular cases, I fear that we should find that we were all, in some measure, tinctured with this frailty of the Jewish elders. Some hidden fault, some bosom error, lurks in all our breasts, which we cannot endure should be discovered and attacked. ‘ Be as severe as you please on every other quarter but on this:—have some mercy on poor human nature! If it is an error, is it not a little one? and surely when I am free from that vice or t’other which so many of my neighbours and acquaintance are guilty of, I may escape unnoticed, in the trifling gratifications I allow myself.’ This is the kind of reasoning which we know that we so frequently make use of to excuse ourselves to our own minds for any failies of passion and resentment into which we are betrayed, on being charged with any practices which habitual indulgence or other circumstances may have rendered dear to us; but, trust me, my brethren, it

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it is as false reasoning as can be employed upon any occasion whatsoever. Had the Jews who came to enquire of our Lord into the nature of the authority upon which he acted, candidly answered his question respecting John the Baptist, he would, in his own reply, have brought them directly to the conviction of their error in not believing and attending to the tenor of his own mission; and then as honest and well-disposed men, they would have acknowledged their fault, and quitted the practice of it without delay. In like manner, it is our duty, when charged with a fault to hear our accuser out, whoever he be, but more especially when he comes like our blessed Lord to those his enquirers, as a messenger of peace and a preacher of righteousness,—to hear him out, I say, and to compare his accusations with the dictates of our own conscience; and when we discover that they agree, to confess our error, and to correct it as soon as possible. Irksome, I know it is, to

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human nature, to humble itself to acknowledgment, to desert the practice of a darling vice; but I tell you, this must be done, otherwise you will experience the infinitely more irksome pangs of fruitless remorse and despair, when conviction comes too late for amendment, and repentance answers no other end than to aggravate the severity of punishment.

And this brings me to consider,

2d, The other principles of conduct by which the Jewish priests and elders were actuated; namely by an ignoble deference to the opinions of others, and a consequent apprehension of their displeasure at its being opposed; expressed by — “if we shall say of men, we fear the people.”

And here we should previously remark that, in this particular instance, this condemnable principle prevented them from affirming a falsehood, and therefore so far tended to good; but though that

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was a laudable effect, the general spirit of its cause was extremely detestable: and it is this which we are now about to consider.

This fear is divisible into two kinds;

A fear of danger, and

A fear of disgrace.

1. There may be particular situations into which a man may be brought, that render his avowal of the truth extremely perilous to his own safety. Now, though it may not be always necessary for a man to declare the truth, and in such a case, where personal security is at stake, it might be right to withhold it; and though every pretence for personal contest and hostility must be scouted by every one who has the least of the spirit of Christ in his constitution, yet I affirm, that where we are called upon to defend the truth, whatever risk we may run, we are bound to do it; and this by no means involves a permission to use violence to the person of our opponent: it only allows

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lows us to declare the truth with the resolution of the Christian, who knows that he is bound to obey God rather than man ; and who, if he offends man by the preference given to the commands of God, looks up to heaven for his justification, and calmly abides the consequence of his choice and his appeal. This was the spirit with which the ancient heroes and martyrs of the church were actuated, when they resisted unto death, and sealed their religion with their blood ; and their example will determine what our duty is in similar situations.

2. But, thanks be to God, we are not appointed to undergo these fiery trials of our faith, which they so nobly endured. It is by the second kind of fear, which I mentioned to you, that we are the most liable to be affected ; the fear, I mean, of disgrace. And here, it must be owned, we are peculiarly vulnerable. So much are we attached to this world, that we frequently sacrifice to its opinions, our nearest

nearest and best interests. A spirit of levity, thoughtlessness, gaiety, and even impiety, are in many cases so contagious, that many a man who entered into society with the most timid circumspection and caution in his thoughts, words, and actions, has gradually lost them in his intercourse with the dissolute and the profane, and taken up in their place, that hardness of mind which is prepared for any thing ; and if you were to ask him, how he could so wantonly have made shipwreck of his conscience, he would tell you, that for his part, it was with reluctance that he had yielded his former opinion and scruples ; ‘ but one can’t be singular ; and a man’s words go for so little in the world, that they may be liberally past off for the sake of company and good fellowship.’ He would tell you this, I say, and perhaps he would be perfectly satisfied with it for the present. But where would be the conviction of such reasoning, when he was languishing

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under the hand of disease, and agitated by the anxieties and restlessness of a death-bed? You will allow with me, that then every thing that we have thought, or said, or done in compliance with the humours of a foolish and a wicked world, and in contradiction to the dictates of our sober conscience, will be the source of the bitterest reflections and remorse. Why then, I would ask every reasonable person, do we wait till we are about to die, to relinquish that which we are sensible is wrong, to put in practice that which we knew to be right? How much misery are we laying up in store for ourselves! how much happiness are we trifling with!

One more observation will conclude all that I have to say to you, on the present occasion. The two erroneous principles which we have been considering, are evidently particular instances, in which we are called upon by our most holy religion, to renounce the world and the flesh. They are both deeply concerned

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in our acting from those motives. The world, in our giving up both our reason and our conscience to its instigations ; the flesh, in our pampering its pride and self-sufficiency, and never acknowledging the error, of which we are accused and convicted, in order to our reformation. As Christians then, who have been baptized into such a renunciation, it is impossible that we can with any pretensions to consistency, adhere to and build our practice on them. We should remember too, that every moral absurdity involves the most serious and the most lasting consequences. We know that we are heirs to immortality ; and I need not stop here to prove to you that there is an essential difference between an eternity of misery and an eternity of happiness, and that that difference is most highly interesting when applied to our own existence.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XVIII.

CHRISTIAN CHARITY ENFORCED.

Colos. iii. 14.

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ДІАДОХІВ ЗАМІСТ
СІЛВІЯ ГІЛІЯНІЯ ПАУЛОГО

Година 17

the church is daily drawn into the
service of most soldiers who no blood
DISCOURSE XVIII.

COLOS. iii. 14.

**AND, ABOVE ALL THINGS, PUT ON CHA-
RITY, WHICH IS THE BOND OF PER-
FECTNESS.**

OF all the virtues that are recommended to us by our blessed Saviour and his apostles, there is none on which they lay so great a stress, none on which they bestow such encomium, as on charity. It will not then be an unprofitable undertaking to explain,

1st, The origin, nature, and extent of this virtue, in the gospel acceptation of the word; and,

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2d, The motives by which it stands enforced on our practice from its own intrinsic excellence, and the deformity and bad consequences of a contrary principle.

1. When we set ourselves to analize and examine this principle of Christian conduct, we find ourselves lost in the wide field which it comprehends. Would we consider its origin, we discover that it is derived from God himself; an emanation from that divine fountain of love and goodnes, which created man in the spiritual perfection which he enjoyed before he fell, by voluntary transgression, into the corruptions of an earthly nature. That love which, after his disorderly will had subjected him to the cravings of a sensual appetite, and to the dreadful consequences of its gratification, vouchsafed, unsought, and undeserved, to extend his merciful assistance to restore and redeem him to that divine life, which his fatal disobedience had extinguished and overwhelmed, under the vile affections and inclinations

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which it introduced into the human mind : that love, I say, which invested the Son of God with human nature, to give a lively example to men of the most unparalleled benevolence, through a life uniformly spent in doing good, and in a death professedly endured for their sakes, and in their stead : that love which manifested itself in the various particulars of our blessed Saviour's process upon earth ; by which "the blind received their sight, the lame walked, the deaf heard, the dead were raised up, and the poor had the gospel preached unto them :" that love which animated every precept he gave to his disciples, which taught us "to love our enemies," and "to pray for them who persecute and despitefully use us ;" and which at the close of his life of goodness, gave the most gracious testimony of its purity and comprehensive excellence, in that prayer which he breathed out for his persecutors, when his expiring humanity was struggling under the agonies of the cross.

Finally, that love, which opened the kingdom of heaven to all mankind, and gave commission to his disciples to preach the gospel to every creature, in that spirit of “peace on earth, and good-will to men,” which knows no distinction of “Greek or Jew, circumcision or uncircumcision, Barbarian or Scythian, bond or free, but Christ alone, the same Lord, who is rich unto all that call upon him.”

The nature and extent of such a virtue, of so noble a descent, and so divine an origin, cannot but be transcendently excellent and great; seated in the human mind, it there pervades every secret recess, triumphs over every thought, affection, and principle of action, and takes absolute and entire possession of the whole inward man; whom it first exalts to heaven, there to display to his enraptured perceptions the wonders of Almighty love, and fire him with a reciprocal ardour for its bright Author and Source; and thence as from his native habitation, to which his first and best

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best affections are always to tend, brings him back again to this world, and connects him with every individual of its inhabitants by a disposition of kindness, meekness, forbearance, and forgiveness, ever ready to exert itself in good offices, uninfluenced by the hope or the disappointment of return from the object it obliges, because unambitious of any reward but that which it derives from the exercise of its own diffusive goodness. Should therefore the world receive the benefit of its friendly inclination, not only with indifference, but even with ingratitude and ill-treatment; should it smite back the hand which is extended for its relief, its plan of benevolence still continues steadily and invariably pursued; unimbittered by these untoward and aggravating circumstances, it breathes nothing but pure and disinterested philanthropy, ever active and fruitful in deeds of kindness and munificence, to the utmost of its ability; and when that fails, pours forth a prayer of intercession

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intercession to Heaven, and appeals to that God who seeth in secret, but who will reward openly, to bear testimony of that unabating spirit of love which constitutes its life and essence. Hence it is that true charity is not confined to any rank, degree, or condition of men, but is as much the virtue of the poor as of the rich, of the beggar as of the monarch ; since it does not consist in the extent of the means which we possess of external liberality and beneficence, but in the inward disposition to good, independent of any power or opportunity of exertion :—

“ Though I bestow all my goods,” says the apostle, “ to feed the poor ; and tho’ “ I give my body to be burned, and have “ not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”

Charity then is not merely the distribution of superfluous wealth to those whom the humour of the moment may suggest to us to be deserving it ; it is not that principle which induces a man who has accumulated his thousands, by all the gainful arts which the spirit of this world

can

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can invent, to dedicate a part of it to the endowment of an hospital, or the beautifying of a church, as a peace-offering to God, for having lived a life totally engrossed in earthly pursuits, and directly opposite to the spiritual one which he requires of us; it is not that which owes its value to the employment of the perishable good things of this life, and shines in gaudy splendor to the eye of a thoughtless world, which does not look beyond the surface; it is a virtue which shines to its God; which none can partake of but those who have destroyed the dominion of self; who have crucified the old man, with its lusts, partialities, and pride; who think of themselves with lowliness and humility, and of others, with every kind allowance for human frailty; slow to anger, slow to revenge, and ready to forgive; who are willing upon every occasion to do good to mankind, without distinction of friend or foe, without any ignoble views to private aggrandisement in reputation or fortune, and without any fancied

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fancied scruples of the deserving of those who require their assistance ; knowing that the judgment which men form of the merit of each other, is in one instance so liable to be perverted by a variety of circumstances, that it can never be depended upon ; and in another, has no relation to the exercise of a virtue which has for its object mankind in general, and for its standard and example the impartial goodness of God, who maketh his sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and his rains to descend on the just and on the unjust. In a word, none can possess it in its true perfection and extent, but such as earnestly endeavour to walk in the spirit of their blessed Master, and whose lives, in their principles, affections, and actions, are one uniform system of love to God, and good-will to men.

2dly, It will be no difficult task to convince you of the amiableness of this virtue, after the description which has been just given you of it : nor need we

wonder

wonder that it is preferred by the apostle to the most exalted spiritual gifts, and to the splendid virtues of faith and hope ; since it concentrates in itself the excellence and original principle of all the other Christian virtues, or, in the emphatical language of my text, is the bond of perfectness.—“Charity,” says he, “never faileth : but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail ; whether there be tongues, they shall cease ; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.” Faith will end in certainty, and hope be swallowed up in fruition ; but charity extends beyond the limits of time, and will flourish in eternity. Constituted by our blessed Saviour, as the distinguishing characteristic of his religion, it is the one spirit of the kingdom of God upon earth and in heaven. Here, it communicates that peace which the world can neither give nor take away ; that inward tranquillity which the storms of adversity, or the flattering seductions of prosperity, cannot

ruffle

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ruffle or disturb, and which lifts the soul above the little bickerings and animosities which agitate, and the groundless partialities and prejudices which narrow the minds of carnal men; and hereafter it will diffuse joy unspeakable, and happiness unallayed, to those, who under its benign influence have gained admission into those blissful regions, “where God shall wipe away all tears from all eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain:” that God, who is love itself, and who hath commanded us to “love one another, as we love him;” and hath invited us to love him, by the endearing consideration of his having “first loved us.”

If any thing farther is necessary to recommend this most excellent virtue of charity, it is the conviction of the deformity, and bad consequences of a contrary disposition. Look abroad into the world, and see how opposite a spirit to that of Christian

Christian love, prevails more or less in every rank and condition of it, and what bitter fruits it produces in each of them. Reflect how every species of domestic and social bond is thereby loosened and broken; how mutual confidence is destroyed, and jealousies and suspicions, misunderstandings and resentments, animosities and quarrels introduced, which could not subsist, if the spirit of Christ had its proper degree of predominance. See how frequently man stands opposed to man, with every power of mind and body on the watch, to over-reach and get the better of each other, and every art employed to obtain an unmanly, unfriendly, and unchristian advantage over a brother and a fellow-creature. See how eagerly they lay hold of an opportunity of exposing their mutual faults and errors! Each secretly rejoicing in the misfortunes of his neighbour, and envying him the possession of a blessing, which is only desired because afforded to another, and which,

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if bestowed upon himself, would be past by in silent contempt and ingratitude. Turn next your observations to the political conduct of nations and states, with respect to each other: consider the principle upon which all their dealings and intercourse are conducted; their wars, their treaties, their commerce; and tell me whether the least trace of Christian charity and benevolence is to be found in them, and whether the calamities which are incident to public as well as private life, are not greatly aggravated, if not principally caused by the want of it; by the want of that by which our blessed Lord hath declared that his disciples should be distinguished:—“ By this shall men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” And yet we call ourselves Christians; we, who pretend to view the ages of heathenism with horror, and to exclaim against that spirit of revenge, which unassisted nature was too ready to indulge among them,

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at the same time that we, with as little of the spirit of charity (which should be the true distinction between us and them) look with contempt and derision on the man who does not point his vindictive sword against the life of a friend, for a misinterpreted expression or a groundless rumour; nay, defend the principle which gives birth to the murderous intention, and sanctify it with the name of honour. If it be so, we may safely declare that honour is no Christian virtue, and is wholly inconsistent with that charity, meekness, and placability, which are so highly applauded in every page of the gospel, and even pronounced in the most positive terms to be essentially necessary to the belief and practice of the truths and the duties which it inculcates. And here let me appeal to your own consciences, my brethren, after having favoured the reflections which have been offered to you with your candid attention, whether you can suppose it possible that we can neglect the cultivation of such a

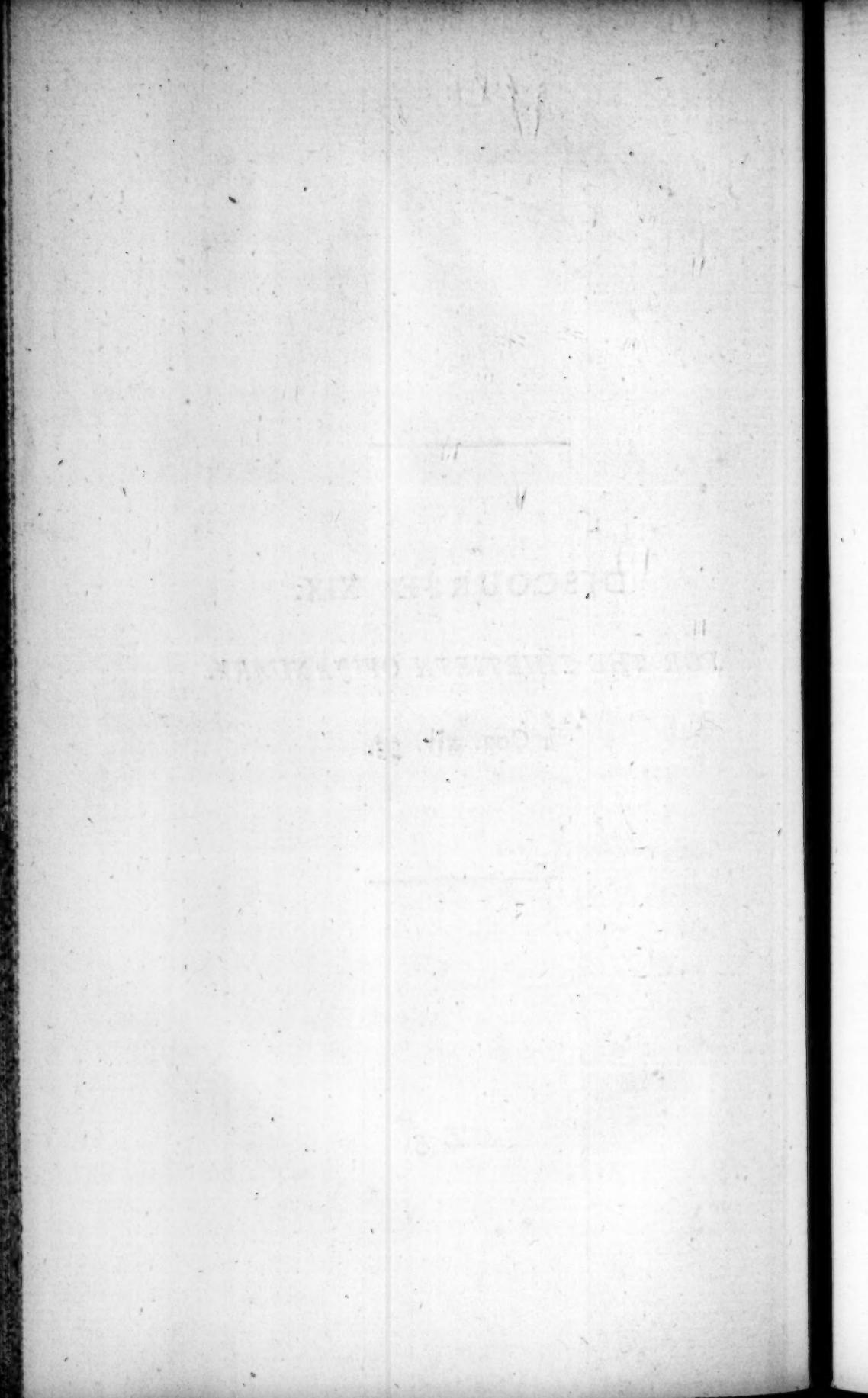
truly amiable virtue as charity, which is recommended to us by so many engaging and powerful motives; and that we can suffer the spirit of this world so far to prevail over us, as to adopt a contrary principle of bitterness, revenge, and self-will, which carries with it its own curse, at the same time that it is most loudly and particularly condemned by our blessed Saviour, by precepts as well as by example; whether, I say, you can suppose it possible, that we can submit to so detestable a guidance, without risking the loss of every thing which Christianity proposes, in recompense to those who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit; and the incurring of all those dreadful threatenings which it denounces against those who hold the truth in unrighteousness, and, under a dispensation which was graciously intended to raise us again to the purity of a divine life, live to the corrupt tempers and passions of our fallen nature? Let us not deceive ourselves, by supposing that we can obtain the joys of heaven upon

upon easier conditions than the entire conversion and devotion of ourselves, our powers and affections to God and religion, and a steady system of conduct, of which the leading principle is the love of God : “ But if a man say, I love God, and “ hateth his brother, he is a liar ; for he “ that loveth not his brother, whom he “ hath seen, how can he love God, whom “ he hath not seen ? ” According to this reasoning of the apostle, good-will to man must be a coincident affection with the love of God ; and charity be indeed the bond of perfectness, and comprehend in it all that is excellent in practical religion. The inference from this is easy, and the lesson important ; it is briefly, in the words of another apostle, — “ Let “ all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and “ clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away “ from you, with all malice ; and be ye “ kind one to another, tender-hearted, “ forgiving one another, even as God, “ for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven you.”

DISCOURSE XIX.

FOR THE THIRTIETH OF JANUARY.

1 COR. xiv. 33.



DISCOURSE XIX.

I COR. xiv. 33.

GOD IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF CONFUSION,
BUT OF PEACE.

ST. Paul having had occasion to address himself to the Corinthians, on the subject of the spiritual gifts which had been imparted to them, after their conversion to Christianity;—in order to exhort them to a due regularity in the exercise of them, sums up their obligation to such a system of moderation in the memorable words of my text:—“God is not ‘the author of confusion, but of peace.’”

The peculiar structure of the sentence under consideration, seems to render it

necessary that the words, Confusion and Peace, should be set in opposition to each other ; and accordingly I propose to consider them as terms of contrast, expressing different extremes, as far removed from each other as possible.

By Confusion, I mean to understand that anarchy, irregularity, and indecorum, which naturally arise from a state of licence, wherein no authority is acknowledged and exercised.

By Peace, that order, harmony, and consistency of conduct, which are the necessary consequence of discipline and good government, exercised upon individuals for the benefit of the community.

According to this acceptation of the words Confusion and Peace occurring in my text, the sense of the whole passage may be thus expressed :—That God prescribes to and requires of us, a life subject to the regulations of human authority, which He has established and permitted, for the civilizing and amending
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of it; and therefore cannot but condemn the practices of those who, setting themselves loose from every restraint, contribute all in their power to introduce confusion into a system which has been established upon the most exact principles of order and decorum by Him "who is not "the author of confusion, but of peace."

Having taken this latitude in the interpretation of my text, I intend, in the

First place, To shew you the venerable foundation on which human authority is grounded:

2dly, The indispensable necessity, and great expedience of its being exercised for the welfare of society; and the consequent obligations we are under, to give our obedience and support to it: and,

3dly, I shall conclude with making some short practical reference to the present occasion.

I. No one, who considers for a moment the relation which subsists between God and his creatures, can hesitate to allow
that

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that he has the most positive right to govern and direct them, according to the dictates of that power, wisdom, and goodness, which gave them being. To doubt of the existence of such a right as this, would be a rebellion against God of the most heinous nature, and a madness of the most deplorable cast: — For “ shall “ the thing formed say to Him that “ formed it, why hast thou made me,” why hast thou ordered me “ thus?” — Can the being, who owes every thing he possesses; even the very breath which he is spending in complaint, to the gracious exercise of that authority, murmur against it, with any pretensions to reason and propriety? The judgment of every sober man must immediately condemn so impious and foolish a conduct, and concur with the most unfeigned assent in the absolute right of God to the government of his creatures.

It seems essential to the idea of power, that it may be delegated and transferred by

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by the lawful possessor to another :—more particularly the idea of the divine power over us, founded on the right of creation, most necessarily implies, that God may exercise it through the medium of any being, to whom He may think fit to commit the reins of government: and we have the testimony of revelation to assure us, that the powers which subsist in this world are of God. “ By me,” saith God, “ kings reign, and princes decree justice. “ By me princes rule, and nobles, even “ all the judges of the earth.” — “ Let “ every soul,” saith his inspired apostle St. Paul, “ be subject unto the higher “ powers; for there is no power but of “ God. The powers that be, are or- “ dained of God: whosoever therefore “ resisteth the power, resisteth the ordi- “ nance of God; and they that resist, “ shall receive to themselves damnation: “ for rulers are not a terror to good “ works, but to the evil. Wilt thou, “ then, not be afraid of the power? Do “ that

“ that which is good, and thou shalt
“ have praise of the same ; for he is the
“ minister of God to thee for good. But
“ if thou do that which is evil, be afraid,
“ for he beareth not the sword in vain ;
“ for he is the minister of God,—a re-
“ venger, to execute wrath upon him that
“ doth evil. Wherefore ye must needs
“ be subject, not only for wrath, but
“ conscience sake.”

We see here the origin of human authority not only clearly ascertained and defined, but the maintaining of it by punishment, positively justified and allowed. And though there may be instances, and too many of them, perhaps, of this authority (which we have been expressly told by the apostle, is imparted by God to his ministers for good) being perverted and abused to evil purposes; yet this is no argument of any real force, against our general obedience to the presiding powers. The tribunal to which they are immediately amenable for the misapplication of
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DISCOURSE XIX. 349

the talent allotted to them, is the tribunal of God who committed it to them : and if every individual who thinks himself wronged by his superior, was to attempt to do himself right by resisting his authority, the deplorable consequences which must result to society would yield the clearest demonstration that this mode of conduct could not be pleasing to the God of peace, and that a day will come, when the disturber of that peace must answer for his invasion of it to a Judge from whom there can be no appeal.

II. In prosecution of the second division of my subject, wherein I affirmed the absolute necessity and great expedience of human authority for the welfare of society, and the consequent obligations we are under to give our obedience and support to it, I propose to answer a question which objectors may put on the present occasion, in opposition to the affirmation just made ; ‘ why,’ say they, ‘ was power confided to human instruments, who

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“ who are so liable to error ; and not de-
tained in the exclusive possession of
Him, whose essential attribute it is to
judge rightly ? ”

The best answer which can be given to this, as well as to all other objections to the arrangements of divine Providence, is, That since authority has been delegated in the manner we know it has to human vicegerents, by Him who must be necessarily acquainted with what is most expedient for the welfare of his creatures, and as necessarily must adopt it ; we have every possible reason to be satisfied, that no other mode of government whatever could have been of equal advantage to the world as such a delegated one : And even with our imperfect view of the causes and proprieties of things, we may easily discover that had Providence administered human affairs immediately by himself, the continual manifestation of the divine power would either have diminished our respect to it, or, what is more

DISCOURSE XIX. 351

more likely, would have been so terrific and depressing, that all moral liberty would have been destroyed, and we should have rendered an obedience to his will, which would have been constrained and involuntary, and consequently destitute of the smallest pretensions to merit.— And if the instruments whom he has been pleased to employ as his representatives upon earth, often betray their trust, and injure the cause of right which they were appointed to defend, this is a circumstance which dishonours them, but reflects no disgrace on the institution which has exalted them. They are free agents as well as their subjects, and therefore are as liable to go wrong as they are; and will no doubt pay a forfeit proportionably high, for their perversion of the pre-eminent opportunities of doing good, which their Supreme Ruler has afforded them. So that to persons duly tinctured with the truths of religion, the temporary hardships they sustain from the great, are experienced

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experienced with calmness and tranquility, under the double persuasion that their cruel tyrants cannot escape the notice of the all-seeing Almighty, and impartial Governor of the world ; and that they themselves who mourn now in this their present state of trial and probation, will be comforted with the beatitude of heaven, in the future season of retribution and reward. A mind under the influence of such opinions as these, will possess fortitude sufficient, notwithstanding its own private calamities, to revere the authority which has been exerted to its injury. It will be convinced that the affairs of this world, if left to the arbitrary will and direction of every individual who might chuse to assume the conduct of them, would exhibit a pattern of that chaos, which preceded the subjection of confusion to the divine word, which reduced it under the restraints of beauty, harmony, and order ; and while it looks abroad into the society of which it is a member, and sees

sees it flourish under the subordination of government, it will forget its domestic wrongs, and contribute its utmost to support the fabric, although it is burdensome to itself. The tenor of its own conduct will be uniformly right; and if that of others be wrong and unfriendly to itself, it will be no otherwise affected by it than to fix its affections more steadily upon that kingdom of righteousness which its blessed Redeemer, who erected it, and who presides over it, has declared to be "not of this world," but "eternal" "in the heavens;" and to transfer all its hopes, who "loveth whom He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."

Having thus explained to you the origin, necessity, and expedience of human authority, and the obligations which bind men to yield obedience to it,—I proceed,

Lastly, To make some short practical reference to the present occasion.

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For I would call to your remembrance, that this day has been set apart by public authority, for the commemoration of that event which our church has distinguished by the title of the Martyrdom of King Charles the First. Upon the principles already laid down in my Discourse, I conceive that it will be evident to every one, that the act of dethroning, imprisoning, arraigning, and condemning to death a sovereign by his subjects upon any pretext whatsoever, must be wholly unjustifiable before God, and must therefore require some general depreciation of his displeasure, through every succeeding age of the nation which has so wilfully provoked it. And, in a political view, if we refer to our annals, we shall find it as little conducive to public interest as consistent with public virtue; for there shall we see that the evils so loudly complained of, were more than doubly felt, when the reins of government were torn from the hands

DISCOURSE XIX. 355

hands of the rightful possessor, and consigned to the direction of an upstart usurper; and therefore that, at any rate, the transaction itself must have been rash, imprudent, and dangerous. Thus it is that Providence often curses the wicked and discontented with their own wishes, and forces them to the self-conviction of the impiety and absurdity of infringing that system of order and peace which he designed should prevail in the moral, as well as in the natural world. Such reflections as these readily occur to our minds, when we are called upon to recollect those scenes of violence and blood-shed which deform the page of English history at the period in question: And the use to be made of them, is to learn to be happy, contented, and thankful in the enjoyment of the blessings permitted to us in Church and State, and not to be anxious for the attainment of others, which perhaps we capriciously desire, only because

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already they are not within our reach. Politicians may talk of a tribunal of nations, where the rights of mankind may be weighed, asserted, and the vindication of them justified, to every degree of virulence and animosity ; but then Christians should recollect that they are to be judged at the tribunal of Christ ; and that there, the enquiry will not be how we have resisted, but how we have suffered for righteousness' sake ?—not whether we have fought like heroes, but whether we have loved as brethren ? At that tribunal we know that we are all to appear : and of how much more consequence is it for us to prepare for that great event, than to figure on the theatre of the world, with all the restlessness, turbulence, and dissatisfaction of modern patriots, I leave to yourselves to determine ! And may God of his infinite mercy give us grace so to decide, and so to act, that after having performed our duty as good citizens in his kingdom

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kingdom on earth, he may raise us to be members of his blessed community in heaven, the spirit of which is love, peace, harmony, and contentment ; where he shall wipe away all tears from all eyes ; and where “ he shall dwell with us ; and “ we shall be his people, and he shall be “ our God.”

DISCUSSIONS

of the time and the conditions
and in which we live. It is
true that the world is
constantly changing, and
that it is difficult to keep
up with all the latest
developments. But it is
also true that there are
many things that remain
constant, and that can be
used as a guide in our
lives.



DISCUSSIONS - A

DISCOURSE XX.

*CHRISTIAN HUMILITY AFTER
CHRIT'S EXAMPLE.*

(A Lent Sermon.)

PHIL. ii. 5.

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DISCOURSE XX.

PHIL. ii. 5.

LET THIS MIND BE IN YOU, WHICH WAS
ALSO IN CHRIST JESUS.

A MONG many important advantages accruing to mankind from the incarnation of our blessed Lord, it is obvious that those are no inconsiderable ones which are derived to us from the example of his life and conversation upon earth: but the full force of this example, Saint Paul convinces us, cannot be thoroughly understood, but by our carrying back our view beyond the commencement of that human existence which he was pleased to assume, upon our account.

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The general tenor of his example we know to be, that of the most perfect humility, meekness, and patience. Now, there can be nothing which can so much enhance that pattern, as the consideration of the pre-eminent excellence of his pre-existent state, and of his voluntarily divesting himself of it, in order to take upon him a condition infinitely below it, and much lower than many of the ranks of human life, to accomplish the benevolent design which had been projected in the divine counsels for the redemption and salvation of mankind: and it is these reflections which the apostle excites in a very forcible manner in the verses subsequent to that in which my text is contained. "Let this mind," says he, "be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion

“ fashion as a man, he humbled himself,
“ became obedient unto death, even the
“ death of the cross.” In this passage
there are some circumstances which re-
quire our investigation; and although
they may not be immediately referable to
the words of my text, they will tend indi-
rectly to establish its full meaning. In
the first place, we are to understand our
Saviour’s being in the form of God, and in
the form of a servant, and made in the like-
ness of men, as terms of opposition. As
therefore He was truly a man (and so truly
an one, as that some should contend
that he was only a man) really and in-
deed subject to all the weaknesses, infirmi-
ties, and bondage of the flesh, and to all
the discomforts, restraints, and wants of
a subordinate condition in it, we must be
convinced that He was truly God, in
the estimation of the apostle. Indeed,
when we consider only for a moment the
literal meaning of the form of God, we
shall be at a loss to know how the di-
vine form can be separated from the
divine

divine nature; and must, in consistency with our ideas of the divinity, be forced to allow that if the divine form expresses a visible exhibition of the divine glory, it must be considered as made in the energy of the divine nature. And this is farther confirmed by the succeeding clause, "that " he thought it no robbery to be equal " with God." The obvious interpretation of this passage, whether in the original or translation, is that his being equal to God was no usurpation but his essential right and attribute; and, in this acceptation of the passage, the sense of the whole will be, let the same tempers of humility and self-abasement distinguish you, as were also conspicuous in Christ Jesus; who, though he partook of the divine nature, and had the most rightful claim, in respect of it, to an equality with the Father, yet voluntarily divested himself of all his essential glories and perfections, and became a man, in the lowly condition of a servant and mechanic, and humbled himself even to a death of the most

most ignominious and painful kind : this is evidently the most natural import of the passage ; but it must not be concealed that there have been persons, who have attempted to wrest the expression in a very extraordinary manner ; and to understand by the apostle's words, That He thought it no robbery to be equal with God, that He did not covet nor desire to be equal with God : an interpretation which seems to carry its own contradiction with it : but if we should even receive it as the genuine sense of St. Paul, we shall find that the general meaning of the whole passage will receive but little alteration by this innovation. For then it may be expressed as follows : ‘ Be of the same humble disposition with Christ, who, though he was God (and as God was equal with the Father) yet was so fond of exerting and vindicating that equality, as to refuse to make himself of no reputation to become man, and as man to live an humble life, and to die an

‘ an ignominious death in our behalf.’ In either sense, then, of the passage, we see that the apostle exhorts us to humility by the consideration of our Lord’s original divinity, and of his having (notwithstanding that excellence of nature) vouchsafed to take upon him the inferiority, and even the mortality of our own, to accomplish the gracious purpose of his incarnation. A humility, which as it infinitely surpasses all human comprehension, so it is as a most signal proof of the degree of that virtue which is incumbent on our practice: and which with any other idea of our Lord than that of his participating in the divine nature, dwindles to a standard in no way superior to that of many of the apostle’s, who asserted and defended the truth in spite of all the terrors of punishment, even unto death; not to say, that the apostle is made to introduce the mention of the form of God, and an equality with God, in the most unnecessary manner, without any illustration of the subject,

subject, and at the evident risk of misleading his readers in a very material point.

Considering him, then, as affirming our Lord's divinity as a proof of his humility in becoming a man, it may not be amiss to cite the incentive to our humility, which he proposes in the instance of his exaltation, in that nature in which he humbled himself : — “ Wherefore God ‘‘ also,” says he, “ hath highly exalted ‘‘ him, and given him a name which ‘‘ is above every name ; that at the ‘‘ name of Jesus every knee should bow, ‘‘ of things in heaven, and things in ‘‘ earth, and things under the earth, and ‘‘ that every tongue should confess that ‘‘ Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of ‘‘ God the Father.” The exaltation here spoken of to be consistent with the preceding observations, must allude to the exaltation of the human nature of our Lord, in conjunction with his divine, which, in itself, is incapable of any farther exaltation beyond its intrinsic supremacy ; and

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we may observe that this is with peculiar propriety introduced here, as being the foundation of our hopes of exaltation to happiness in the kingdom of Heaven, through him who we see is gone before, to prepare us a place in the mansions of glory and bliss.

Having thus endeavoured to establish the nature of the pattern of humility proposed to us in Jesus Christ, and shewn how illustrious that virtue was in him, the perfections of whose nature rendered every humiliation wholly voluntary and purely gratuitous, I proceed with a more immediate reference to the letter of my text, to enlarge on the singular propriety of its being followed by us, who have so many reasons for self-abasement, in the consideration of our inherent demerit and unworthiness.

It is the great privilege of Christians that they are ingrafted into a society, the governing laws and principles of which are founded upon the most accurate know-

ledge

ledge of the condition of its members ; for in truth it is Christianity alone which has discovered to us ourselves in our true colours. In the Old Testament, it must be allowed, that we are taught to trace back our propensity to ill, and our misery in consequence, to the transgression of our first parent ; but it is only in the New that we see how we may be redeemed from it. It is in this last revelation that we discover the whole truth of our situation,—that we are placed, as it were, between the kingdoms of nature and grace, and are at liberty to become the subjects of the one or the other : and this liberty of option we are clearly taught to attribute to the gracious interposition of the Son of God, made not in favour of beings who could have rescued themselves from their wretched condition, but of such as could not do any thing in their own behalf. Of course there seems to be the strictest propriety in our being required to cultivate a disposition of the profoundest

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humility and self-abasement; for to be a ruined and yet a self-conceited creature, to be deserving of death and yet vain of one's merit, is to establish as striking an inconsistency and opposition between our conduct and condition as possible: And that revelation has with the greatest truth assured us we are fallen, degenerate creatures, may be proved by a direct appeal to every man's experience of the state of his own mind; for in that inspection we shall find such a variety of lurking corruptions and foul propensities, as would be more than sufficient, without the intervention of divine grace, to plunge us into a general system of disobedience and profligacy. It is a melancholy truth, tho' a striking proof of the fall of man, that if we are not all decisively wicked, yet that we have all the seeds of every species of wickedness existing in our nature, which only want the consent of our wills to produce the most deplorable consequences. Not a temptation of any kind presents

presents itself to our mind, but in an instant there arises an advocate for its being closed with. Happily for us, the voice of conscience, and the whispers of divine love and mercy, always interpose to contradict his suggestions ; and, if we are inclined to listen to their admonitions, will effectually over-rule them. This, I conceive, will be found to be a faithful picture of the human mind ; and if so, I think that it must carry with it a mortifying conviction of the need and necessity under which we labour, of other assistance than our own, to preserve us from the guilt and the misery of sin ; as this conviction establishes beyond a doubt the propriety of humility and self-abasement, upon the foundation of our own experience, in confirmation of that best authority which they derive from the precepts and example of our Blessed Saviour. His parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, which may be taken as a specimen of all his preaching on the subject, is admirably

contrived to shew us the odiousness of pride, of self-sufficiency, and the amiable nature of contrary principles. The address of the one to Heaven was,—“God, “I thank thee that I am not as other “men are!” That of the other was,—“God, be merciful to me a sinner!” The first did not acknowledge that, tho’ there might be some men worse than himself, he was himself much worse than he ought to have been; that he had abused many opportunities of moral improvement, and perverted them into occasions of cherishing his pride and self-satisfaction; but gloried in his fancied merit and superiority to the rest of the world: while the other, conscious that he was a sinner, presumed not to compare himself with the more abandoned part of mankind, and to hug himself in the result of the parallel; but with down-cast eyes, and contrite heart, he prostrated himself before the throne of grace, with the honest confession of his guilt and misery. And attend,

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attend, I beseech you, to our Lord's comment on the fact:—"I tell you," said he, "that this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other." And by whom?—by the God whom they were addressing. And what was the assignable reason for this preference? — Because "that every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." What, you will say, shall the Pharisee, a man zealous for the cause of religion, devoted to the study of it, and scrupulous in the practice of it—a man who "fasted twice every week, and gave tithes of all that he possessed," shall he be condemned, while the Publican, a tax-gatherer, who lived upon the miseries of his fellow-creatures, upon the rigid collection of the impositions of an usurping power, extortionate in themselves, and aggravated perhaps by his own little schemes of profit, shall the Pharisee, I say, be condemned, while the Publican is acquitted? This, I must tell

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you, is saying more than our Lord's expression will admit of: neither were acquitted; but the Publican was justified rather than the other. They were both sinners, both deserving of condemnation in different ways and degrees. Perhaps, when you weigh the superior advantages of the Pharisee, his accurate knowledge of his duty, which you mention with such encomium, his leisure to cultivate, apply it to the improvement of a life disengaged from the charge of toiling for his daily bread, an education commencing upon better principles and with more propitious circumstances; when, I say, you weigh all these particulars against the ignorance, the prejudices, and the necessities of the Publican, perhaps, you may find that the Pharisee had more, in fact, to answer for than the other. At any rate, you must allow that his own merit was not so good a foundation for him to depend upon as the mercy of God; his own merit too, illustrated by a malevolent stroke

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at the infirmities of his fellow-creatures : It appears in truth this, his confidence in it, was extremely ill-grounded. His only refuge, like that of the Publican, the despised, the infamous Publican, was in divine mercy and forgiveness. But mark how different their appeal was :— “ God, “ I thank thee that I am not as other men “ are ; ” and “ God be merciful to me a sinner,” are as dissimilar as they can be : one flowed from a heart deeply stung with remorse, and thoroughly sensible of its own unworthiness ; the other breathed nothing but self-confidence and superciliousness. What different subjects for divine goodness to work upon ! I might almost say, how impossible was it for its illuminating rays to penetrate the folds of pride and vanity which inclosed the heart of the Pharisee ! — and how instantaneously, on the contrary, must they have pierced thro’ the Publican, — “ even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, of the joints and marrow,” in the paroxysm of

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his humility and contrition! It was by this divine goodness alone that the publican was justified rather than the Pharisee; and it is by this alone, thus invited, and thus received, that we can be justified and saved. The temper and disposition on which it delights to manifest its gracious influence, our apostle has informed us of, in the words of my text; to "let this mind be in us, which was in Christ Jesus"—Christ Jesus the ever-blessed Son of God, who, though equal with God, yet humbled himself to take our nature upon him, to live and to die in that nature—to redeem us from ruin: what can more strongly enforce the necessity and intenseness of our humility, than such an example of it given for such a purpose! —the humility of the Son of God humbling himself to save us from destruction, when it was impossible we should otherwise have escaped it! How do all the wants and miseries of our condition range themselves before us in their most dreadful

ful array ! and, if ever we are capable of being moved by their magnitude and importance, how must we be confounded, when we consider, in one complicated view, all that our blessed Lord and Saviour has done and suffered to relieve them ! At this season, so nearly connected with that which immediately commemorates the closing scene of his expiatory life, we must be most particularly affected with these considerations ; bitter, however, as the reflections may be, which arise from the contemplation of those sufferings which originated in the heinousness of our transgressions, let us forbear to drive them from our minds ; for who can tell but in the pathos of that grief, Providence may find the happiest opportunity of fixing in us those tempers of meekness and humility, which we have seen to be so peculiarly consistent with our infirmities as men, and our hopes and dependence as Christians ; and which, in our several dealings with each other, will teach us, in
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the words of our apostle, “ to do nothing
“ through strife or vainglory, but, in
“ lowliness of mind, to esteem each better
“ than ourselves ;” and in our demeanor
towards God, will direct us to “ work
“ out our salvation with fear and trem-
“ bling, knowing that it is He alone
“ who worketh in us both to will and to
“ do according to his good pleasure.” In
fine, which having contributed to obtain
for us here the esteem of our fellow-crea-
tures, the approbation of our conscience,
and, what is of infinitely more conse-
quence, the favour of God, will hereafter
be rewarded with the beatitude promised
by our Lord to the “ poor in spirit,” in
his emphatic assurance that “ theirs is the
“ kingdom of heaven.”



END OF THE VOLUME.

